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“THE HOME-RUN KING”



In the thirteenth inning Pep again came to bat, and right there the game was finished.

[The Home-Run King]

THE
"HOME-RUN KING"

OR

*HOW PEP PINDAR
WON HIS TITLE*

By

"Babe" Ruth
(GEORGE H. RUTH)

A. L. BURT COMPANY

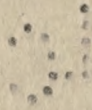
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A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Twenty-six years ago—February seventh, eighteen ninety-four, to be exact—a big black-haired baby boy was born in Baltimore, Maryland. His mother and father both looked at him with awe and pride and named him each in his or her own way. George his father said it must be, and Herman his mother insisted upon, and so he became George Herman Ruth.

It was good effort almost wasted. Before the boy was eight years old the George Herman was forgotten.

The trials that naming this youngster caused his parents were as nothing compared to what the years held in store for them. It does not take long for a boy to find out that the hills and creeks of Maryland are a wonderland, calling insistently to him to come and bask in their secrets, when the warm suns of Spring are making the streets of Baltimore hot and muggy.

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Boys have a great way of choosing their own leaders, and George Ruth's smile and the great bulk of him made him a marked lad. When he was only five he was the size of most youngsters of eight or nine and welcomed as a companion by boys of that age.

Boys of five or six, as a rule, have not arrived at the baseball stage. Be that as it may, the fact remains that Ruth was being punished for his love of the game before his sixth birthday. It was his first year in school. Spring was on in earnest. Schoolrooms had become warm and musty. The Maryland hills were turning green. He knew where there was a game and a place for him.

If he had been satisfied with an occasional lapse from grace all might have been well with him; but one taste always begets another, so before the year was over George Herman Ruth had made himself decidedly unpopular with the authorities in charge of Baltimore's public schools.

That summer George Ruth played baseball to his heart's content.

School opened that Fall and it was a time of misgiving for his parents. George had promised to attend strictly to business, but over his head

hung the sentence that if he were again reported as a truant he was through.

It was not long before Ruth's father knew that his boy was in trouble. You cannot get an education by attending school two or three days a week. George Ruth was finished as far as the public schools were concerned.

Everyone in Baltimore knows of St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys. It is an institution run by an order of Catholic Brothers. Boys who have been ungovernable and incorrigible are sent there and taught a trade. Whether it is by superior patience or a better understanding of boy nature, or possibly a combination of both, boys are set right and have left there to go out into the world to carve success for themselves.

Ruth's father had determined that George should go to St. Mary's. His mother, like all mothers, did not want to see her boy go away, and especially to a school that many people referred to as a "reform school." In the end he went, and no one knows better than "Babe" himself that it was the move that made him.

He was only about seven then, and as he waited all alone to be enrolled in the school, sure enough,

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he was homesick. The door opened. Tears were in his eyes when he looked up to see a man, as big as he is himself to-day.

The man looked like a giant, in his black robe, his hands and head huge, and in keeping with the size of him. But it was not his size nor the large head which drew George Ruth's attention—it was the man's eyes! They were smiling as eyes sometimes do, and in them was the kindness he had only found in his mother's. They belonged to Brother Matthias, the man who more than any other made "Babe" Ruth what he is to-day. It was their first meeting. Years have come and gone. George Ruth, the little, lonesome boy, has become the greatest man in the world to millions, rich and famous, but he has not forgotten.

For twelve years he went to St. Mary's. "Babe's" father would have had to comb the country over to have found such a hotbed of baseball as the school to which he had sent his son. There were always thirty to forty teams in the school at a time.

Brother Matthias had charge of the athletics and "Babe" had to stand well in his eyes. Some idea of the proper proportion of education to

sport was instilled within him and his way was easy.

There were games at St. Mary's in which he played every position. The years rolled by and in the school he got a reputation for being a powerful hitter. Brother Matthias believed that "Babe" was a catcher and repeatedly insisted on his playing that position. During some of these early games at St. Mary's, long before he had made the first team and won the dignity of a uniform, he made four or five home runs in a game and as many as sixty to seventy a year.

Ruth was seventeen when he made the first team. St. Mary's had a fine club that year and good reports went out about its heavy hitting catcher, who also was no mean prospect as a pitcher. About this time "Babe" had some ambition to be a boxer, but luckily it was short lived. Winter came again and another birthday in February passed, and Ruth was eighteen.

For years John Dunn, known to the baseball fans of the country over as "Jack" Dunn, had been managing the Baltimore Club in the International League. He has a reputation second to none for picking likely looking youngsters. He

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had heard tales about young Ruth and one day that winter he made a trip to St. Mary's to see him.

His surprise when Brother Matthias called him in to meet Mr. Dunn can well be imagined. It was with a shock that he realized just who this "Mr." Dunn was and what brought him to St. Mary's. Dunn was willing to take "Babe" on the Spring training trip and give him a salary of \$600, which sum was almost beyond him to contemplate.

Brother Matthias had as a matter of course, through Ruth's enlistment in the school, become "Babe's" legal guardian, and he saw in Dunn's offer a real chance for the boy and persuaded him to go.

The trip to Fayetteville, the Spring training camp of the Orioles, was the first real journey he had ever made. The professional ball players were used to having boys up with the team for a few weeks in the Spring and observed their coming and going with little interest as a rule, but Ruth's size and the fact that in the very first practice game he had made a homer off league pitching made him an object of interest.

Dunn tried him at short with no success.

"Babe" pleaded for a chance as pitcher, and in an inning or two showed enough promise to warrant Dunn in starting him in the first of a series of exhibition games against Connie Mack's famous Athletics. That was in nineteen fourteen and the Athletics *were* the Athletics in those days.

Ruth's greatest chance had come. Oldring, Collins and Murphy were the first three men to face him in that game. In order he sent them back. Three strike-outs!

"Babe" won that game. The final score was 6-2 in his favor, and to complete his happiness Dunn voluntarily raised his salary to twelve hundred dollars. Before the International season was two months old Dunn had given him another increase of six hundred.

Carrigan was managing the Red Sox in the American League that year and he saw enough in Ruth to bring him into the majors. By July Fourth the boy who a year before had been a sand-lot player on St. Mary's second team was in the big leagues—the dream of every ballplayer.

"Babe's" stay with the Red Sox was short-lived, however. Under an optional agreement, Carrigan sent him down to Providence in the same

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league with his old team. He had made good with Baltimore as a pitcher and had no trouble in winning for Providence. In September Carrigan recalled him, and he was back to stay this time.

"Babe" had received two blows when Boston had farmed him to Providence. Going back to the minors when he had been so confident was bad enough in itself, but during those few days in Boston he had met a Miss Helen Woodford, a Texas girl studying there. The attraction was mutual and she waited to welcome him back to the place where he belonged. That Fall they were married in Baltimore.

Nineteen fifteen was really Ruth's first season as a major leaguer. He was used only as a pitcher that year and won eighteen out of twenty-five starts. That year he made only four home runs, but to the surprise of the league batted .300, which for a pitcher was incredible.

The next year, nineteen sixteen, he led the American League pitchers with a record of twenty-three games won out of thirty-six. It was his best year as a pitcher, although he fell off in batting to .272. Boston got into the World's Series that Fall and Ruth made a record of scoreless innings

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that still stands for World Series pitching,—thirteen in a row!

The following year he was used exclusively as a pitcher with winning results and batted fifth for .325.

The life of a pitcher is short in the big leagues, whereas a slugging outfielder is good for a long time, and that winter "Babe" made up his mind to give his entire thought to hitting.

So when the season of nineteen eighteen opened he was given a chance in the outfield and also played first base in a number of games. He tied Walker for the home-run honors of the league that year, both having eleven to their credit.

"Babe" was established now as a heavy hitter and most people believed his pitching days ended back there. However, he pitched seventeen full games in nineteen nineteen and broke the big league records for all time in the matter of home runs. His total for the year being twenty-nine. He had to beat "Buck" Freeman's mark of twenty-seven made years ago to do this.

He at once became the biggest drawing card in the game and Boston could not well refuse the offer of \$130,000 made by the New York Yankees

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for him. It was the largest price ever paid for a ball player.

The wonderful record he made in nineteen nineteen was soon broken to bits, and as this is written he has amassed a tremendous total of fifty-one home runs.

Back at St. Mary's he had learned the secret of right living. Not once during the twelve years he spent there had he missed church and not a Sunday since has found him absent, no matter where the game has taken him.

Money has flowed into his purse in an ever-increasing stream. In New York he and his wife have an apartment, but it is out at Sudbury, a suburb of Boston, where the real home is. "Babe" has a cigar factory in Boston and it is no rich man's hobby either. Between baseball, the movies and the stage his time is pretty well taken up, but he finds time to be alone with his family and friends, where he is just a big boy, full of enthusiasm and a shining example to all other American boys of what life will give you if you try hard enough and get started on the right road.

"THE HOME-RUN KING"

CHAPTER I

PEP BREAKS A RECORD—ALSO THE BAPTIST MEMORIAL WINDOW AND EDDIE SWEET'S BEST BONNET

BING! The loud, sharp crack, as the swiftly moving ball met the still more swiftly moving bat, told the spectators that it was a heavy hit. Jake Snyder, who was pitching for the town boys, had tried to fool Pep Pindar, the champion batter of the school nine, by delivering what Jake called one of his famous "cannon ball shoots." But Pep was not caught napping. His keen eye had judged the ball with accuracy and, with his feet solidly braced, he had put every ounce of his sturdy, muscular body behind the swing of his stick. The bat met the ball at exactly the right angle and, as it shot forth, Pep started speeding towards first base.

"Holy Mackerel! What a wallop!" squealed little Tick Wood, the score-keeper, jumping excitedly to his feet to watch the flight of the ball.

"I'll say it's some wallop," agreed Pink Hopper as he chased down towards the first base coaching line. "It's a homer all right. Go it, Pep!" he yelled, "all the way round the mulberry patch." Then, still noting the flight of the ball, Pink continued, "Great Cæsar! It's going clean over the top of the meeting-house sheds. Take it easy, Pep, nobody's ever going to catch that fly."

Sure enough, the ball was sailing over the roof of the long row of wooden sheds, owned by the Baptist Church, situated back of center field.

"That sure is a record-breaking clout," admitted Jake Snyder with mingled admiration and chagrin. "He must have caught it right on the nose in just the right spot."

It was a record-breaker. While a few batters, on rare occasions, had managed to hit a long fly that reached the sheds, no one before had ever heard of a player batting a fly over the top of the sheds. In fact, this was deemed an impossible feat. As the Baptist Church was located just the other side of the sheds, it would have

made the ball field dangerous if the batters could hit the balls over the sheds.

It was late Saturday afternoon and the East Wingate schoolboys were just having a little practice game with some of the town boys, getting in trim for the big annual game between the town team and the school nine, which always took place a few weeks before school let out, when the Teachers' Institute was being held at the East Wingate Union High School.

As the ball disappeared over the roof of the sheds, the boys heard a startling crash.

"Oh, mama!" yelled Pink. "It must have shot right through one of the windows of the Baptist Church."

Players of both teams and spectators raced across the field to investigate. As they came to the corner of the sheds, Willie Peters, who had been playing center field and had already gone around and found what had happened, came rushing back to tell the news. With the others, Pep was running to see what damage had been done.

"You're in for it now, Pep," called out Willie. "The ball went right straight through that big Deacon Sloan Memorial window at the back of

the church and maybe it hurt somebody inside, because it is choir-practice night and I heard a lot of racket and yelling inside."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Pep in consternation, "I guess that will cook my goose with dad so far as going to Wingate Academy is concerned. If they make him pay for that window he'll be sorer than ever about my playing ball so much and it's a cinch he'll make me stay on the farm and work it out. What'd we better do, fellows?"

"Let Willie run around to the door and peek in and see if anybody is hurt," advised Pink. "Then if it's all right, let's beat it over to Pop Murray's garage and tell him about it and see what he thinks we had better do."

Willie hastened to the door, glanced in and then came back and reported.

"I guess nobody's hurt very much, although all the choir is gathered around old Miss Bronson, the music teacher; but she was standing up and talking so I guess likely she was more scared than she was hurt."

Without waiting to retrieve the ball or to make any further investigations, the boys hastened back across the field to Pop Murray's garage, which

was situated near the end of North Main Street.

Dennis Murray was almost a patron saint for all the boys of East Wingate. Although he had no family of his own, having always been traveling around too much to stop and get married, as he explained, yet he was known as Pop, not only to the boys but to every person in the community. In his youth he had run away from home to join a circus and had traveled all over the country. Later he had joined a traveling baseball nine. In his day he had been a famous pitcher, but an attack of fever had left him unable to continue at ball playing. As he had first begun his circus career by helping to take care of the horses, during which period he had learned the art of horse shoeing, when the attack of fever forced him to quit the diamond, he bought out the blacksmith shop in East Wingate, which, in the course of time, became a garage and sort of general repair shop.

Pop was one of the most respected citizens of East Wingate and was generally regarded as being one of the best informed men on baseball matters in the country.

The walls of his shop were decorated with photographs and pictures, cut from newspapers, of

scores of famous ball players. Pop could give the history and record of every player on any major league team, as well as that of any of the star players in the minor leagues.

As the boys came trooping up to the garage, Pop was helping his assistant, Bill Sweeney, to shift a tire on a big elegant-looking touring car that stood in front of the garage. Standing beside the car, watching the work, was a stocky-looking individual, dressed in a long duster and motoring costume. A smartly dressed chauffeur was giving instructions regarding the mending and shifting of the tire. As the boys came up, Pop dropped his tools and turned to them with a smile, saying:

"Well, me laddie bucks, what's the trouble now? Have you got into a scrap and want me to settle it for you?"

"It's something worse than a scrap this time, Pop," said Pink Hopper, who was captain of the school team and usually acted as spokesman in matters of this sort. "What do you think, Pop? Pep has just batted a ball clear over the meeting-house sheds and right bang through the Deacon Sloan Memorial Window, which folks say cost more than a hundred dollars to put in. Now it

looks as though this is going to knock the spots out of his chance of going to Wingate Academy with the rest of us next term."

"What's that ye say?" asked Pop in amazement, "do you mean that Pep knocked a ball clear from your home plate all the way across the field and over the meeting-house sheds, into the church windy?"

"We sure do mean just that," answered Pink. "It was a humdinger of a drive and broke all records for home runs on our field, but it looks as though it's going to be a pretty costly home run for Pep and the rest of us fellows."

"Do you think they'll make Pep's father stand all the cost of the busted window or will——"

"Hey there, Pep Pindar!" The exclamation came from a tall, flashily dressed youth who, evidently, had been following the boys to the garage and had just caught up with them. In one hand this youth was carrying a battered straw hat which had every appearance of having been run over by a steam roller.

"Look at my new hat, will you, Pep Pindar, and see what you did when you batted your old ball through the church window? You got to pay for

that hat, Pep Pindar. It cost me two dollars and sixty-five cents and this is the first time I ever wore it."

"Oh, what's biting you, Sweetie? How did I bust your old hat? The ball didn't hit it, did it?" asked Pep.

"No," admitted Eddie, "the ball didn't hit it, but it might have. I was just practicing on my tenor solo for next Sunday, when smash! that ball came in through the window and sent the glass flying everywhere and everybody yelled and old Miss Bronson threw up her hands and almost fainted away and flopped right down on my hat—and you're going to pay for it, too, Pep Pindar."

"Oh, go chase yourself, Sweetie!" exclaimed Pink, "you and your hat. I guess we've got trouble enough figuring out how we're going to pay for that busted window without thinking about your dinky old bonnet."

"'Tain't a dinky old bonnet," howled Eddie, "it's my best new hat and I've only worn it once and now just look at it." And as he held it up for their inspection, dangling by the bright purple band, the boys, despite their worries over the window, were obliged to laugh at his doleful expression.

"Well," remarked Pop, "I guess we'd better go right over and visit the scene of the disaster, as the newspaper boys say." Turning to his assistant, "I guess you can finish up the tire, can't you, Bill?"

"Sure," said Bill, who, of course, had stopped work to listen to the confab.

The owner of the car also had been a very interested listener.

"If you don't mind, I'll walk along with you," he said. "I am somewhat interested in baseball and I would like to see just how long a hit the young fellow has made."

"Sure, come along," said Pop, "but I can tell you, from what the boys have told me, that it must have been a terrific clout."

They all trailed back to the ball field with Ed-die Sweet tagging along behind still growling about the loss of his best Sunday bonnet and threatening dire disaster if Pep Pindar didn't pay for the damage.

CHAPTER II

A MYSTERIOUS STRANGER COMES TO THE RESCUE

As THEY reached the home plate and the stranger noted the distance that the long home-run hit had traveled, he turned an admiring glance to Pep and said:

"Well, young man, it looks to me as though you must be a natural born batter."

Pep blushed as he replied, "I like to hit 'em out as hard as I can," while his friend, Pink, who was more voluble, explained to the stranger:

"You see, mister, Pep is our champion hitter and his biggest ambition is to learn how to bat heavier than any other player around here—and I guess he's done it this time all right."

At this moment they were interrupted by a group of people, evidently the choir, who came around the corner of the sheds, lead by a stout, elderly lady who was gesticulating vigorously and

talking excitedly to a clerically dressed gentleman who was carrying a baseball in his hand.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Pink in dismay, "here comes the Baptist minister, Mr. Henry Fletcher, and old Miss Bronson and the choir. Now we're going to catch it."

As the choir came nearer Miss Bronson was saying shrilly:

"I never was so scairt in all my born days. I was standing down by the front pew listening to Eddie Sweet sing his solo. He was singing simply grand. I don't know as I ever heard him sing sweeter. He had just got to that part where he repeats 'An angel fair from Heaven came,' each time in a higher key, when, all of a sudden, there was the biggest racket you ever heard and the whole window came smashing in and I was so confused that I thought to myself, 'Here comes the angel fair,' and then I almost fainted away and sat right down on Eddie's hat. But soon as I came to and saw that baseball rolling down the aisle I knew right away that this was some of Pep Pindar's doings. That boy ought to be run out of town. He thinks about nothing but ball playing."

"There, there, sister Bronson," exclaimed the preacher soothingly, "you mustn't let yourself get so excited over this. Surely you must realize that it was an accident and that Paul didn't mean to do it."

"Yes, he did, too," exclaimed the excited lady. "I bet he hit that ball just as hard as he could. He had no business to hit it so hard. They ought to make him stop playing if he doesn't stop hitting the balls like that. Why, I should think it would smash the balls all to pieces and, besides, it's dangerous for any folks to be around. Don't tell *me* he didn't do it on purpose."

By this time the two groups had come together and the clergyman gave a friendly greeting to Pep and remarked:

"Well, it rather looks as though our baseball team has a little tangle to straighten out." Then, turning to Pep, he continued, "I suppose it was you who made this long hit, wasn't it, Paul?"

"Yes, I did it," admitted Pep, sheepishly. "I've always been trying to see how hard I could hit the ball but I never expected to make one go way over the sheds like that."

"What do you think the damages are going to

be, Dominie?" inquired Pop. "Of course it is a little exciting, but I guess we can fix it up. I reckon most of the boys will chip in as much as they can afford and I guess some of the rest of us can make up what is left. Do you know what the window cost?"

"I believe it cost the Sloan family a hundred and thirty dollars," the minister replied. "As you are aware, this is the biggest and most expensive window in our building. But don't you think that Paul's father would be willing to pay the damages?"

"Of course, he'll pay if he has to," admitted Pop, "but as you know, Dominie, Mr. Pindar isn't much of a baseball fan and the boys kind o' think that if he has to come across for a big wad of money like that, he won't let Pep go to Wingate Academy but will make him stay home on the farm. You know Mr. Pindar isn't very much in favor of Pep's going to the Academy anyway."

"Isn't this young fellow's father able to settle the damages?" inquired the stranger at this point.

"Oh, yes," replied Rev. Fletcher, "Mr. Pindar owns one of the biggest farms in this community

and is quite well-to-do, but, as he has made his money by hard work, he's rather careful about spending it. Besides, Mr. Pindar is not altogether pleased with Paul's record in school, because, I regret to say, our young friend is not one of our most brilliant students."

"Brilliant student!" blurted out Eddie Sweet at this point, "Pep Pindar is the biggest dunce in the whole town. All he cares about is playing ball. He'd never got through school at all if it hadn't been for Tick Wood and Pink Hopper always helping him out."

"Oh, you shut up now, Sweetie," threatened Pep, turning towards him, "or I'll give you a good punch in the eye."

"Don't you dare touch me," squawked Sweetie, backing away. "I ain't done nothing to you and you busted my best hat all to pieces and you've got to pay for it, too."

"Hold on there, boys!" exclaimed Pop, "don't start any more rows until we've settled this one." Turning to the stranger, he explained:

"You see, young Pindar here takes a lot more interest in playing ball than he does in attending to his books. He is a top-notcher in ball playing but a tail-ender when it comes to study."

"But why is he so anxious to get into Wingate Academy then," asked the stranger, "if he doesn't like to study?"

"Oh, he hopes that he can manage to study enough to keep in Wingate," replied Pop, "but he figures that he will have a chance to do a lot more ball playing there."

"I can see for myself," continued the stranger, "that he is some ball player. Why, that hit over the meeting-house sheds must be about as long a drive as any made by some of our big league swatters."

"Yes," said the preacher, as he sized up the distance, "I should judge this hit must have been as long a distance as from the home plate to the back bleachers on the Polo Grounds."

"Are you interested in ball playing?" inquired the stranger. "You seem to be rather familiar, for a parson, with baseball affairs."

"In my college days I pitched for Amherst," said the preacher with some pride, "and I have always regarded baseball as one of the most manly and healthful sports, and, of course, I do all I can to encourage the game among our boys."

"Sure, the Dominie usually is the 'ump' for most of our games," put in Pink.

At this point, the stranger, reaching into his pockets, withdrew a roll of bills that made the boys' eyes fairly bulge out with astonishment at its size. Stepping over to the preacher, he peeled off a couple of yellow-backs and handed them to him, remarking:

"Why not let me in on this and fix it up without any further trouble? Parson, suppose you take this money and have the window fixed up and then, surely, Mr. Pindar won't have anything to kick about. While I must confess that usually I am a little more interested in baseball than I am in religious matters, yet I certainly am mighty glad to have a chance to give a boost for any church whose preacher is a baseball fan."

The preacher, in astonishment, took the money mechanically; then thrust it back towards the stranger, saying:

"No, I don't think it would be quite right to let you do this. Besides I am sure that two hundred dollars is more than would be required to repair the damages, because, in a window of this kind, all of the parts that are not broken can be used in making the repairs. This is too much to accept from a perfect stranger although your offer is wonderfully generous."

"That's all right, parson," said the stranger, making a motion for him to keep the money. "The amount won't make or break me and I suppose I might as well admit that I have often spent bigger sums for a less worthy object. You keep the two hundred and if there is anything left over you can put it in your collection box. While I can't say that I know the rules of churches as much as I ought to, yet I have always heard it reported that it was rather unusual for preachers to refuse money, and I can give you my assurance that this is good, honestly earned cash. It's none of that 'tainted money' that newspapers have told so much about."

In the meanwhile Pop had been staring very intently at the stranger's face and he suddenly exclaimed:

"Say, mister, I've seen your face somewheres and now I place you. You're——"

"Not so loud about that, if you don't mind," interrupted the stranger. "I have a certain reason of my own why I would just as soon you don't make any guess, out loud, as to who I am." Then, as a second thought occurred to him, he continued, "But if you think you know who I am, you might assure the parson that it will be all right for

him to accept my little contribution and that I can easily afford it."

"You surely can take it all right, parson," Pop urged. "This man won't miss a couple hundred bucks as much as you and I might a couple dollars."

The preacher hesitated and then said, "Very well, then, of course I'll make no further objections if that is the way the matter stands. But it surely is a generous deed and if there is some way that we could show our appreciation of the way——"

"That's all right," interrupted the stranger with a smile, "I'll tell you what you can do. You give that ball to me as a souvenir and let the young fellow who made the big home-run hit put his name and address and the date on it and I'll take it back home to add to my curio collection. I am quite a bug about collecting trophies," said he, turning with a sort of knowing wink to Pop, who, returning the smile, remarked, "I'll say you're some trophy collector." The preacher handed the ball to Pep, also a fountain pen which he took from his vest pocket, and Pep carefully inscribed his name and address upon the leather. Taking

the ball the stranger turned away towards Pop's garage.

Meantime the rest of the party had been listening, in too great astonishment to make any comment, but, as the stranger and Pop started back towards the garage, Eddie Sweet suddenly came to life and yelled out:

"How about the two sixty-five for my busted hat? Does that come out of the money you've given to the preacher?"

Turning swiftly on his heel the stranger stared at Eddie rather contemptuously.

"No, young man," he said, "you'll have to collect your own damages. I want to make it a clause of my contribution that no part of it is to go to pay for the damages to your hat." And he and Pop continued on their way to the garage.

"Then you've got to pay for it yourself, Pep Pindar, or I'll——"

"You'll what?" challenged Pep belligerently, while the ladies of the choir, especially Miss Bronson, looked at Eddie with open sympathy and regarded Pep with anything but admiration.

"It's a perfect shame," exclaimed Miss Bronson. "He certainly ought to pay for Eddie's hat

and I don't think that man was very Christian-like even if he was so free with his money, or else he would let part of it go to buy Eddie a new hat. What would two sixty-five amount to out of two hundred dollars?"

"I am terribly sorry, Miss Bronson," put in the preacher, "but, of course, we will have to follow the gentleman's wishes with regard to his very generous gift. So I presume the boys will have to fix up some way of settling their differences. Anyway, I don't think we ought to hold Paul entirely responsible in the matter."

"What's that?" shouted Miss Bronson. "Of course, he's to blame. Didn't he hit the ball and didn't the smash of the window scare me almost into a conniption fit? You don't suppose I'd sat on Eddie's hat if it wasn't for that?"

Meantime Pep and Eddie had been glaring rather threateningly at each other until Eddie finally decided, evidently, that this was not exactly the day for him to collect damages, so, with further threats that Pep Pindar was going to pay for that hat or else he would "fix" Pep Pindar, he slunk away.

The other boys, after spending some further

time discussing the exciting events and speculating as to who the generous stranger was, departed to their several homes, it being long past time for getting supper and doing the evening chores.

As Pep mounted his bicycle and pedaled swiftly towards his home, which lay about a mile and a half west of the village, he pondered over the recent exciting events with mingled feelings of pride and dismay.

He could not help feeling a sense of keen gratification at the long drive he had made, because, as his chum, Pink Hopper, had informed the stranger, his one absorbing ambition in life was to be able to hit a ball harder and drive it farther than any other player in the community had ever been able to do. So, naturally, he was delighted at having so far achieved his aim by his record-breaking hit over the church sheds. Yet the unexpected results of his long fly were still causing him considerable apprehension.

While he hoped that the stranger's settling for the damages would pacify his father for the accident, yet he did not feel altogether certain regarding the outcome because his father had not yet definitely given consent to Pep's desire to attend Win-

gate Academy. Still it was sort of taken for granted that he was going all right, because his mother and his younger sister, Katy, both were enthusiastically in favor of his getting the best possible education.

But Pep's father, John Pindar, was one of the old school type of farmers who do not have any too much regard for book learning. By hard work, long hours and careful saving, Mr. Pindar had been able to buy one of the best farms in the county and while he was not exactly a "tight wad," yet he had learned the value of money, having earned it by the sweat of his brow. Therefore, he took considerable pains to see that whenever he spent any money he got its full value in return. Waste was a serious crime in the eyes of Mr. Pindar.

Doubtless, Pep inherited his distaste for study from his father, whom he greatly resembled in size and appearance. Mr. Pindar was a big, broad-shouldered, giant of a man, weighing over two hundred pounds and strong as an ox. Pep, at seventeen, was scarcely an inch shorter than his father and was almost as broad-shouldered and husky. In fact, Pep only lacked a few pounds of

registering two hundred on the scales, and it was all solid brawn, too.

Pep's poor record as a student, as Eddie Sweet had accused, was not due to his being a dunce or to any natural stupidity. On the contrary, he was a rather unusually intelligent youth, but had simply failed to take any particular interest in books or study. It was always the hardest sort of work for him to get his lessons and it was his custom to spend just as little time with his books as he possibly could and still manage to hang on in school. Several times he had been held back a grade and he was now one of the oldest boys in the graduating class at East Wingate Union School.

When Pep arrived home he found the family at the supper table.

"Late again," greeted his father grumblingly. "I suppose you've been hanging around with those baseball loafers all afternoon and evening while I had to do most of your chores for you. Appears to me a boy of your age and size ought to begin to want to help a little around the place, 'specially when you are thinking of going away to school and leave me to do all the hard work."

"Oh, pshaw, Dad!" burst forth Katy, Pep's sis-

ter, a very pretty girl of fourteen, "what's the use of nagging Pep all the while just because he wants to go to school and get an education? I should think you would want him to be educated so he wouldn't have to work so hard as you've had to."

"Education, nothing!" snorted Mr. Pindar, as Pep made his way to the kitchen sink to wash his face and hands. "All that boy is thinking about is ball playing. He don't care anything more about getting an education than Rover does. Some scholar he is! The oldest boy in his class and I don't know how many times the teachers have threatened to turn him out of school altogether because he didn't get his lessons. So far as gettin' a lot o' learnin' so he can take an easy job, I guess that hard work never hurt me or anybody else, for that matter."

Pep's mother, who, as usual, was the peacemaker in all family squabbles, tried to turn the conversation by saying, "What kept you so late, sonny? Did you make any more home runs?"

Unlike her husband, Mrs. Pindar was intensely interested in Pep's baseball ability. Possibly, this was due to her mother's pride in the one thing that Pep was doing that was gaining him credit and

honor. It seems to be a motherly trait, always to be proud of anything their sons do. Somewhere, it has been stated that the mother of the James boys was proud of their records as being the most expert robbers of their day, but this, probably, was a false report. However, there is no doubt that every true mother is bound to take pride in any unusual achievements of her only son. At his mother's question, Pep smiled somewhat sheepishly.

"Well, yes, Mother, I guess I did make a home run. The biggest one I ever hit but——"

"Oh, gee! Is that so?" interrupted Katy, who was also enthusiastic over Pep's baseball playing. "How far did you hit it?"

"Clean over the meeting-house sheds and into the church window."

"What's that?" shouted Mr. Pindar. "You've busted another window, have you? I suppose I'll have to pay another bill for damages."

"No, you won't," hastened Pep. "A big man came along with a great big touring car and when he heard my hit was such a big fly and broke the window, he came over and gave Parson Fletcher two hundred dollars to settle the damages, and

the parson says the window only cost a hundred and thirty dollars in the first place and that it won't cost anywheres near that to fix it up as good as new or better."

"For the land sakes!" ejaculated Mrs. Pindar. "Two hundred dollars, and a perfect stranger. Why, it must have been one of the Rockafellers or Goulds or Morgans or some of those other millionaires."

"He wouldn't let on who he was," Pep explained, "but I guess that Pop Murray recognized him. Anyway, he was mighty interested in baseball and he had a roll of money in his pocket bigger'n your fist. So I guess he has got plenty of it."

As Pep and the family discussed the further details of the exciting affairs of the afternoon, even Pep's father seemed to be impressed that Pep had done something unusual, although the old gentleman was very careful to conceal from his son any feeling of admiration.

CHAPTER III

PEP'S NINE TROUNCES THE TOWN TEAM AND THE TOWN BULLY NEARLY LICKS PEP

ON THE following Sunday morning, after the chores were over and the family had just finished breakfast, it suddenly occurred to Pep that he would like to sidestep church and Sunday School that day. While not exactly a bashful boy, yet the one thing that Pep hated more than anything else was to have the folks make a fuss over him, and he felt pretty certain that if he attended church that morning there was pretty sure to be a lot of folks staring at him. The Pindar family were regular attendants at the Baptist Church.

So fixing upon the first excuse that popped into his mind, as he pushed his chair away from the table he began to rub his hand over his head and, turning to his mother, exclaimed:

"Gosh, mother, I believe I'm getting one of

your sick headaches. I don't think I had better go to church to-day, because I might be awfully sick from the way I feel now."

His mother was immediately concerned and arose to put her hand upon his head and to take hold of his pulse and examine his tongue. But Father Pindar was not fooled.

"Sick headache, your grandmother!" he exclaimed. "A fellow that can put away a big dish of oatmeal, four fried eggs, two big pieces of ham, a heap of potatoes, about a dozen griddle cakes and two big glasses of milk, like you have, isn't in any dying condition unless he has stuffed himself so full he is in danger of busting."

Pep was willing to grasp at any straw that might help him win his case. "Maybe that's just the trouble, Dad. I guess maybe I did eat too much. I was pretty hungry this morning after the game yesterday and doing the chores. Maybe that's what's making my head ache."

His sister, Katy, was just as skeptical as her father and, moreover, she clearly saw through Pep's camouflage.

"Aw, pshaw, buddy, don't be a goose. You just don't want to go to church because you are

afraid folks are going to make you blush by looking at you and talking about your breaking the window yesterday. I don't see what makes you so afraid of folks looking at you in a church when you seem to like to have them look at you when you are on the ball grounds."

"Aw, that's different," blurted Pep, taken un-awares.

"It is, eh?" remarked his father. "Well, I guess you can manage to stand folks looking at you if the rest of us can and I don't want to hear anything more about sick headaches. You stir your stumps and get on your best clothes and get ready for church."

Even Mrs. Pindar began to see through Pep's scheme, so there was nothing further for him to do but to obey his father's command. As he was putting on his best clothes he tried to think up other schemes and even wondered if he couldn't figure out some way of doctoring up the flivver so it wouldn't run. But he gave up that idea because he realized that the family would fall back on the team of horses.

He was pretty glum and silent as he drove the car into town, but the family was unusually talka-

tive. Katy and his mother were discussing the broken window and what folks would think about it and who would be there and whether the preacher would mention it in his sermon.

The Baptist Church, that day, had an unusually large congregation. Of course, the news of the events of the preceding day had scattered throughout the town and not only all the regulars of the Baptist congregation were in attendance, but many of the people deserted other congregations to visit the Baptist church that morning.

The church auditorium was filled to overflowing and when the Pindar family walked into their pew, just as Pep anticipated, there was a buzz of excited whispers and everybody stared at him. Pep felt that all of the blood in his body was rushing to his face. But Mr. Pindar seemed to endure the publicity with stoical calmness, while Katy and Pep's mother gave every evidence of enjoying it, much to Pep's disgust.

Some boards and paper had been tacked over the broken window and the preacher in his sermon did not make any reference to the matter. But, when Eddie Sweet began to sing his tenor solo, if it had been a theater instead of a church,

one could have said that "it brought down the house." Eddie possessed a very good voice and was especially proud of his singing ability, but the snickers of the younger members of the congregation and the smiles of everyone were rather disconcerting. It is to Eddie's credit, however, that he stuck it out and managed to finish the solo without breaking down.

The pastor was the teacher of the Sunday School class to which Pep belonged, as well as quite a number of the other members of the nine. On this particular day, there was more discussion of baseball matters than there was of the Scripture lesson for the day. The main topic with which the boys were concerned was just how Pep's father was going to act with regard to the situation. Was he going to allow Pep to go to Wingate? Finally several of the boys, including Pep, thought it might influence the decision in their favor if Mr. Fletcher would plead Pep's cause with his father.

So after Sunday School was dismissed, the preacher sought out Mr. Pindar and, after a few remarks regarding the famous window-smashing home run, remarked rather casually:

"Well, I suppose you have decided to let Paul attend Wingate Academy next year?"

"Well, I dunno, parson," replied Mr. Pindar. "I can't say that I see much sense in my wasting money and the boy wasting his time when he don't really care any more about getting an education than a dog would care about having two tails."

"But you must remember, Mr. Pindar, that boys' ideas change. Perhaps Paul doesn't yet fully appreciate the value that an education will be to him in later life. Yet, if he is willing to go to the Academy in order to gratify his desire to play baseball, in some way he may wake up to the advantages of education."

"Seems to me, parson, that I remember something you preached in a sermon a while ago that sort of set me thinking on this line. I remember a little rhyme that you quoted that struck me very forcibly as good sound doctrine, although it wasn't exactly Scripture. You said,

" 'You can lead a horse to water
But you can't make him drink.
You can send a fool to college
But you can't make him think.' "

"But surely, Mr. Pindar, you are not saying that Paul is a fool."

"Oh, no!" was the reply, "he's bright enough in some ways, but he surely don't show it in his studies. However, I have been thinking of a plan that I have pretty near decided to try out, that will let the boy decide for himself whether he goes to the Academy or not."

"What's your plan?" asked the parson eagerly, while the boys, who were hovering in the background, pretending to be intent on their own conversation, but really with their ears strained to catch the talk between Mr. Pindar and the preacher, listened with unusual eagerness.

"Well, here's the idea," explained Mr. Pindar. "All the while the boy has been going to school, I can't think of a single time when he has done anything to bring credit to the family except his ball playing. Not that he has done anything very bad, but he hasn't shown a bit of interest in his books or any of his school work, and his teachers have threatened to turn him out of school and have tried every way to get him to study.

"So I have figured that what he needs most is some sort of what you call incentive, something to

aim at that would make him get down and dig. So I had made up my mind to tell him that if he wins any kind of a merit, or honorable mention even, at the closing exercises this year, I will let him go on to Wingate Academy. But if he don't win a single thing and don't show any improvement at all, seems to me he ought to stay on the farm."

"Wow! Wow! said the fox," whispered Pink Hopper as the boys overheard Mr. Pindar's plan. "Some scheme, I'll say. Well, Pep, old boy, I guess you're up against it."

Pep replied dolefully, "Yes, it does look as though that cooked my goose, don't it?" But as the boys drew away to discuss the situation, little Tick Wood was still hopeful.

"Never say die," said Tick. "It is a pretty stiff proposition, but I believe we can find a scheme to win out on it just the same."

Tick was, by far, the best student in East Wingate and, in addition to being a bookworm, he was also a top-notch baseball fan. Next to Pop Murray, Tick was the best informed regarding baseball matters of anybody in the community and this, despite the fact that he was only "a little runt" and was so near-sighted that he always had

to wear very heavy glasses. Yet Tick was considered sort of a member of the nine although he never could actually play the game.

Pep, who was a few years his elder, was Tick's great hero, and Pep looked upon Tick with almost equal awe and admiration because any fellow who could recite his lessons as glibly as Tick could do, who had so much knowledge and who had so many big words and information at his tongue's end, seemed to Pep to be nothing short of a marvel.

Pink Hopper, the third member of the trio of chums, was both a good ball player and a good student. He was the catcher and captain of the school nine and was well up towards the top in most of his classes in school.

Both Tick and Pink were slated for Wingate Academy, as were several other members of the Union School graduating class. In fact, most of the students in East Wingate who didn't quit school at graduation but attended other "prep" schools or college, were accustomed to go to Wingate Academy, which was situated in the small city of Wingate about fifteen miles from East Wingate in the western part of the county.

There was an occasional student, however,

among the wealthier families, who went to the Lakewood Military Academy, which was a rather fashionable boarding school for boys, located on Elk Lake, near the southern boundary of the county.

As Lakewood drew students from all parts of the county and enjoyed the advantages of an unusually well-equipped gymnasium, physical directors, coaches and other equipment for athletic games, naturally its football, baseball and basketball teams were frequently the champions among the schools of that section.

Wingate Academy, on the other hand, was more democratic and drew most of its students from the nearby farms and villages, many of the boys boarding home and others, as in the case of East Wingate students, going home over the week ends. The only East Wingate boy, a member of the present class, who was planning to attend Lakewood was Eddie Sweet, whose father, the proprietor of Sweet's Emporium and General Store, was counted the richest man of the community.

Eddie never had any time for athletics. He was a fair student, but his two main ambitions were to develop his musical talents, of which he

possessed considerable natural ability, and to be the best dresser among all the boys. Eddie's ideas of dress, however, ran somewhat to the extreme both as to style and colors. He was an earnest student of the wholesale clothing catalogues that came to his father's store and also got a good many tips from the traveling salesmen for the ready-made clothing concerns who visited the town from time to time.

As the boys discussed Mr. Pindar's proposition and cudgeled their brains for schemes whereby Pep might have a ghost of a show of winning the honor in school, most of them finally gave up hope, excepting Tick, who optimistically insisted that they were bound to find some way out of the difficulty.

Finally Pink Hopper said, "Anyway, we can't settle this now. Maybe something will turn up, but the next thing we have got to do is to get ready to take our annual trimming from the home team."

"Trimming, nothing!" put in Tick with disgust. "You make me tired. You fellows think you are licked before you begin simply because the town team has most always had the best of it in the

past. You know we've got a better team than ever this year and there's no reason on earth why, if you fellows only use your brains and play harder than ever, you couldn't win the game."

"Gee, Tick, if you only had as much muscle as you have brains and as much ball playing ability as you have ambition, with you on the team, we could wallop the stuffing out of the town boys," exclaimed Pink admiringly. Then, turning to Pep, "Anyway, Pep, get your dad to let you stay in town and take dinner with our folks to-day and after dinner the bunch of us will go over and have a talk with Pop Murray and he may have some new ideas to give us. It surely would be great if, as Tick says, we could win that game, and it would put you and me in right when we get to Wingate—that is, if you do get a chance to go."

"Oh, piffle!" growled Tick. "Your croaking gives me a pain. Of course he's going to Wingate."

"Well, Tickie, old sport, I wish I felt as hopeful as you do about it," remarked Pep, as he went to ask his father if he could accept Pink's invitation.

Mr. Pindar, evidently, was feeling in a rather

cheerful mood on account of what he considered his clever scheme. With less than his usual grumbling, he gave his consent.

Most of the members of the ball team gathered at Pop Murray's garage that afternoon about two o'clock. The great topic of discussion was the possibility of some plan for their making a "good showing" in the game against the town team. Owing to the fact that the boys who played on the town team were considerably heavier than the school boys—since the East Wingate Union School was rather a small institution—in former years the games had been mostly one-sided, the town team invariably being the victor.

To the surprise of the boys Pop Murray seemed to side fully with the view held by little Tick Wood. Said Pop:

"Now boys, if you have all made up your minds that you are going to be licked, there ain't much use of playing the game, because you are beaten before you begin. What you fellows need most of all is to find out that there is something else besides muscle and age and even experience that wins baseball games. That something is brains. It ain't always the heaviest team or even the team

with the best players that wins the pennant. It's the team that has the brainiest manager and, most of all, the team that works together and knows the most about the 'inside stuff.'

"Now, I've been thinking a lot about this game that is coming off in a few weeks and I have been watching both the town boys and you fellows play quite a bit, and I have finally made up my mind that the school team not only has a chance but it has almost a sure thing if you will only play the game together and carry out a little scheme that I am going to tell you about."

Here was something decidedly surprising to the boys. The optimism of Tick Wood didn't make any deep impression on them, although it was encouraging; but when an old baseball player like Pop Murray told them, with evident sincerity, that he believed they were going to win, it aroused the hopes of the boys most powerfully. And after Pop had outlined his plans and the whole proposition had been discussed in all its details, the team that went home that night from Pop's garage was, so far as their attitude towards the coming game was concerned, an entirely different team. In some way or other every member of the nine was

filled with optimism and confidence. Pink, Tick and Pep and every other player really believed that the plan that Pop had explained to them was going to prove a winner for them.

The chief weakness of their team was in batting. The school boys were even better at team work, and in their general playing abilities they averaged at least equal to the town team. But the town boys were the heaviest and best hitters and it is the hits that win ball games, providing other things are fairly equal.

Altogether, there were only three first-rate hitters on the school team, namely, Pep, who was not only the star batsman of the school but was probably the best hitter in the community; Pink, who was more than a fair batter, and Andy Conklin, the third baseman, who could be relied upon to do pretty good work with the stick. The rest were just the average school boy sort of batters and a few might be called even below the average.

On the other hand, in addition to having a number of good men with the stick, the town team had what they considered a star player as a captain and pitcher for their team. Jake Snyder considered himself a professional ball player because

one season he had drawn a salary as a member of the Union Stars in the city of Wingate.

Jake was a husky, good-looking fellow, whose estimation of himself was several notches higher than any other member of the community held regarding him. He was not overly fond of work and was always losing a job because, very frequently, his ideas of how the business in which he was employed should be conducted didn't exactly harmonize with that of his boss.

Another of his qualities on which Jake prided himself was his fistic ability. At one time he not only had a verbal dispute with his employer but Jake had finally emphasized his opinions with his fists. A case of assault and battery was threatened, but blew over. Jake had also had numerous other fistic encounters in the community. In fact his reputation in East Wingate was much below par, although he aspired to the honor of trying to win the heart and hand of the leading heiress of the town, Eddie Sweet's sister, Clara.

Clara, the object of Jake's adorations, did not give him any encouragement and her parents were distinctly in opposition, yet Jake had one faithful ally in Eddie. Eddie was not so much impressed

with Jake's prowess on the ball field as he was by the fact that, next to Eddie's own self, Jake was the swellest dresser in the community. Jake had traveled about quite a bit and had an air of wearing his clothes that was distinctly metropolitan in Eddie's eyes.

After the conference at Pop's garage, there was a noticeable change in the training tactics of the school team. Heretofore they had spent as much time as possible on the regular ball field. But now, instead of occupying the ball field after school and on all other possible occasions, groups of the team would ride out to the Pindar farm. The excuse given was that, in order to win favor with his father and so increase his chances for going to Wingate, Pep was putting in some unusually heavy licks in the spring planting and the team was helping to save his time by going out to play in the Pindar pasture lot instead of Pep remaining in town to play on the regular field.

This excuse seemed so plausible that no one suspected the real reason for the change in tactics. In fact, the scheme that had been cooked up in Pop Murray's garage was not disclosed until the day of the big game.

The annual game between the school nine and the town boys was far and away the big athletic event of the year in East Wingate. Every spring, school was let out for several days in order that the country school teachers in that section of the county could come in and hold several days' sessions for study and social enjoyment in what was termed the Teacher's Institute. The baseball game was a part of the program for entertaining the visiting schoolma'ams and always attracted by far the largest crowd of any of the outdoor athletic events.

Even Father Pindar was persuaded to take a day off and attend the big game, by the constant coaxing of his daughter, Katy, who really thought that if he saw Pep's brilliant part in the game he might relent of his decision with regard to Pep's winning educational honor before he could enter Wingate Academy.

The town team, although known as the town boys, was composed largely of young men, who naturally were strongly desirous of appearing at their best before the assembled crowd of pretty schoolma'ams.

The rooters were about evenly divided in point

of numbers, but the school boys naturally had considerably the best of it in the matter of noise. Most of the school teachers were rooting for the town boys, but, of course, all of the boys who attended the school were grouped together just outside the running line between home and first base. But the older people were not so vigorous in their applause and the schoolma'ams, even though they outnumbered the boys, were not able to compete with them in the volume of noise.

The Reverend Mr. Fletcher was selected as the umpire, as usual, and the town boys won the toss-up and chose to take the field in the first inning.

As Jake Snyder took the mound and received the shiny new ball, he presented a picture of complete confidence. In fact, all the members of the town team felt certain that there was no doubt as to their winning, the only question being as to how big the score would be.

The first boy up to bat for the school gave Jake the first of a series of surprises. Jake had determined to start the fireworks with the first ball over. Therefore he put extraordinary effort into his wonderful wind-up and the very first ball he shot across was one of his celebrated cannon-ball

shoots. Of course he had no possible idea that the young fellow would connect with this, but Jake was mistaken. Instead of giving a hard swing and trying to knock the cover off the ball, the player simply reached out with his bat and let down about as neat a bunt as could be made by a professional batter.

Of course, the perfectness of the bunt was largely accidental, but its effect was entirely satisfactory to the school boys. Jake, although strong and powerful, was not especially active, and as the ball came rolling slowly down towards him he scrambled for it and made a fumble. Then as he shot it to first base it went wild over the head of the first baseman. Before it could be retrieved, the player was safely on second.

The next player came to bat and Jake again essayed his famous shoot, this time without the wind-up. But, being somewhat disconcerted by the lack of his first effort, he could not find the plate for his first three balls and the batter, evidently being advised by some secret signal from Pink, who was on the coaching line, waited it out and won a pass.

The third batter up also bunted the first ball

across the plate and, although this was not so successful, the runner on second advanced to third and the batter reached first, but the ball reached second in time to nail the base runner from first and thus make the first put out.

Pink, the captain, was the fourth batter up. He waited out the first one and got a strike called on him, but enabled the player on first base to steal second. The next ball he reached for a two-base hit, which brought in the two runners.

Next to bat came Jimmie Coombs, the short-stop, and he promptly laid down another bunt, which was again successful in getting himself to first and Pink to third.

The sixth batter also bunted, but this time it was not with so good success and the ball rolled right into the first baseman's hand. However, the first baseman attempted to double and catch Jim on his way to second and Jim slipped back to first, but Pink raced home from third and safely scored.

Pep was the next batter up and the yelling that greeted him was enough to try the nerves of anyone but a baseball player to whom yells of encouragement are the greatest stimulus to cool playing.

"Bust another window, Pep!"

"Give it the old over-the-shed wallop, old boy!"

"Knock the cover off the ball!" were some of the calls that came to Pep's ears as he calmly grasped his bat and determined to continue the fireworks which were already blazing so thoroughly.

Jake was evidently as fully determined to stop the fireworks, and the first two balls that he put across were wide but fairly burned into the glove of the catcher. Then came a good one and Pep caught it just right. It did not go over the sheds, but it reached them and tallied his first home run for the game.

The next player up tried to bunt and was nailed at first, and so the first half of the inning ended with five tallies.

The town boys' half of the inning was short but not sweet to them. Each of the first three players was caught out on a fly and so the inning ended with a score of 5-0.

As the game progressed the secret of what had been happening when the boys were going out to play in Pindar's pasture became thoroughly disclosed. Pep and Pink, with occasional assistance by Pop Murray, had been coaching the boys in the

art of bunting. While, of course, they were by no means made perfect in this short period of training yet they made sufficient progress so that very few of them were struck out. The batting order had been arranged so there would be a group of bunters and then would come Pink who would try to put across a safe hit, then another group of bunters and then Pep.

Without attempting to describe the game in detail, the score at the end of the eighth inning was 11 to 9, in favor of the town boys. The defensive work of the boys in the field was not quite strong enough to prevent the town boys from scoring rather freely, but the encouragement of the big start gained in the first inning and the consequent demoralization of the town nine helped a whole lot. While they continued their bunting tactics throughout the game, of course, as the game progressed, the town boys became more adept at fielding the bunts.

But it was some task for Jake Snyder, who, though strong, never made any effort at keeping himself in condition. With six boys bunting constantly throughout a game the pitcher has some hopping around to do. So, when the ninth inning

opened and the bunting continued, this time more successfully than ever, Jake had nearly reached the limit of endurance.

To say that he was thoroughly mad is putting it mildly. He was almost beside himself with pent-up rage, particularly when the first three boys up to bat, by their bunting tactics, succeeded in getting on bases. Pep was the next man up. Already, Pep had made two home runs and a three-bagger.

Although mad to the core, Jake still possessed a remnant of baseball intuition and he suddenly decided to take no chances. The first delivery was a ball, the second was a ball, the third was also a ball and just then Pep woke up to what was happening. In an instant he realized that Jake was giving him a free pass, even though Jake realized that it would force in a run.

But when the fourth ball came through, Pep had laid counter-plans to upset Jake's scheme. Jake was not attempting to put much speed or curve into the ball, therefore as Pep reached out across the plate and connected with a wide one he cleaned the bases and made his third home-run hit for the day.

As the reporters say, pandemonium broke loose. The school boys along the side lines were jumping and yelling like wild Indians. Of course, as is usual in games between two local teams, there had been more or less scrapping throughout the day and some of the comment made by the spectators was rather rude, to say the least. During the game Jake had made a blunder which brought a remark from a spectator that "Jake Snyder didn't have enough brains to give himself a headache."

This incident gave an inspiration to one of the smaller boys who was poetically inclined and he evolved a poem or yell which, after whispering together, the crowd of school boys proceeded to chant.

"Jake! Jake! Bonehead Jake!

Hasn't any brains, so his head can't ache!"

As the spectators were laughing at the antics of the boys, all at once Jake seemed to see red. The ball from Pep's homer had been returned and Jake stood holding it in rather a dazed fashion. But, as the chant of the boys came to his ears, suddenly he let forth a yell, and saying, "Take that,

you little imps!" he flung the ball straight at the group of dancing and yelling youngsters. If the ball had ever hit one of the boys there is no telling what would have happened; but fortunately both for Jake and the boy who might have been struck by the ball, Pep, after crossing the home plate, was standing near the group of boys. With a jump, he just managed to catch the swift ball in his bare right hand.

The cowardliness of Jake's deed and the sting of the ball was enough to stir Pep beyond the limits of his usual self-control. Dropping the ball, he started towards the big pitcher shouting:

"You dirty, sneaking coward!"

In his present frame of mind, nothing was so pleasing to Jake as the prospects of a good battle, and with a few choice words he rushed to meet Pep. But, quick as they both were, the umpire was quicker. Rushing between the two angry players, he shouted:

"Paul, go back to the bench!"

The preacher's tones were sufficiently decisive to cause Pep to take a second thought, so that he slowly obeyed. But not so with Jake. He came rushing on and tried to pass the preacher.

"Get out of this! I am going to knock that young fellow's block off."

At this point, from among the spectators, piped up Eddie Sweet's voice. "Give him one for me, Jake. He busted my straw hat."

The preacher, however, did not hesitate, but said, "As for you, Jake Snyder, you are not going to fight and you are going to leave these grounds immediately."

At this, Jake no longer gave his attention to Pep, but turned to the preacher. "I am, eh?" he sneered. "Who's going to make me?"

"If you know what is healthy for you, you will leave these grounds within two minutes and if you are wise you will also leave the town. Instead of wanting to fight with young Pindar, you ought to thank him, because the chances are he has kept you out of the penitentiary."

But Jake was not to be pacified. He must have a fight with someone and even a preacher was better than nothing, so, with an angry sneer, he yelled, "Git out of my way!" and, at the same time, made a pass at the preacher.

It was not a thunderbolt that struck Jake's jaw, but to him it had about the same effect. Pastor

Fletcher was known to be a pretty good all-round athlete and boxing was one of the arts which he had studied quite successfully. Quickly sidestepping Jake's lunge, the preacher had planted his fist at the point of Jake's jaw with just sufficient force to take all of the fighting spirit out of the big bully.

As Jake slowly arose to his feet he said, "I don't want to fight with any preacher," and, amid the hoots and jeers of the spectators, he slunk off the field. The next day, it was found that he had also taken the preacher's further advice and had moved, bag and baggage, to the city of Wingate.

The remainder of the game was rather tame. Pep's third home run proved sufficient to win the game, as, in their half of the ninth, the town team was only able to secure another run, making the final score 15-12 in favor of the school boys.

CHAPTER IV

IN ORDER TO GET A CHANCE TO PLAY BALL, PEP SEEKS EDUCATIONAL HONORS

ON THE Saturday evening a few days after the big game, most of the boys were again gathered in the back room of Pop Murray's garage, holding a sort of impromptu celebration of the victory. The boys had chipped in to provide the material for a little "feed" and, while a big kettle of cocoa was being prepared on the little stove in the corner of the room, they were reviewing the various incidents of their big game.

"That game surely ought to cinch us for a place on the team at Wingate Academy," Pink remarked. "Did you see the big account of the game in the East Wingate items of the *Wingate Herald*?"

"Yes, it surely ought to get *you* a place on the

team, all right," Pep replied, "but I guess there's not much chance of my going."

"For the love of Pete! You don't mean to say that your father saw you do all that star playing and still refuses to give you a chance? I thought it was Katy's idea to get him to go to the game and then coax him to let you go on to Wingate if you made good."

"Yes, that was Katy's idea, but it doesn't happen to be dad's. His idea of making good doesn't mean making good in baseball. Doggone it, I wonder if he ever played anything when he was a boy?" grumbled Pep. "Anyway, it hasn't loosened him up a bit and he still sticks to the old gag that I have got to win some honors in school or else I'll have to give up the idea of going to Wingate."

"Gee, but that surely does make it pretty tough, don't it?" said Andy Conklin, sympathetically. "There's less than a month now before school closes and I suppose you are too far behind to have any chance of catching up now. How about going in for the Phillips prize in history? Can't you write a pretty good two-thousand-word essay, getting some of the rest of us to help out a bit on it?"

"Yes, I might do that all right, but when old man Phillips arranged for that prize he left a rule that every fellow who tried for it had to have an eighty-five per cent standing in history throughout the term," was Pep's reply.

"Doggone it, wouldn't it make a cat sick?" said Pink. "It's going to take all the fun out of going to Wingate if we can't have you along with us, Pep. Why, with you and me on the team next year we would trounce the daylights out of Lakewood. I suppose you saw by the papers that Lakewood won two games out of three this year."

Just at this moment Tick Wood came noisily into the room.

"Hello, you gang of rough-neck rowdies!" was the greeting he used, it being suggested by a remark that Miss Bronson had been overheard to make during the fracas on the ball field. "What's the big idea of all this gloom? You look as though you were getting ready for a funeral, instead of celebrating the greatest victory that East Wingate school ever won on the green diamond. Why, you look like a bunch of grave-diggers instead of the famous East Wingate Champions."

"Oh, cut out the chatter, Tick," said Pink. "I

guess you would feel blue, too, if you had made the record that Pep made in the big game and then found out that it wasn't going to get him anything. His father still says that Pep can't enter Wingate Academy unless he wins some honor in school."

"So that's all you are worrying about, is it? Well, you poor prunes, haven't I told you all along that I was going to fix that? Why, I came over to-night with the honor for Pep right here in my pocket—almost. What's the idea of your doubting my ability as a prophet? Didn't you know that I am the seventh son of a seventh son? Wasn't I the first one that told you we were going to win the big game? Cheer up! I've got it all figured out so Pep's winning that honor is going to be as easy as falling off a log. All you've got to do Pep, old top, is to make a little speech."

"What?" shouted Pep. "Is that *all* I've got to do? Why, you poor little fish, I couldn't make a speech to save my neck."

"Oh, yes, you can," said Tick confidently, "when I tell you all about it and show you just how to do it."

"Well, go on and give us the big idea," said

Pink. "What's it all about? What do you mean? Do you really think Pep has a chance?"

"A chance!" fairly shouted Tick. "Why, didn't I just tell you that he has just the same as got that honor pinned on his chest right now?"

"Well, what's the use of all this talking? Go on and tell us what you've got in your crazy bean," said Andy Conklin.

"Well, of course, you all know that one of the most brilliant events in the affairs of our well-known temple of learning, the East Wingate Union School, is the Annual Prize Speaking Contest. As you all know, every year, two handsomely cloth-bound books, with gilt edges and everything, are given as prizes, one for the girl and one for the boy who makes the best recitation. And when Pep makes the best recitation and wins the prize, isn't that a school prize and won't his father have to make good on his promise? You bet he will!"

"But," protested Pep, "I can't speak a piece for sour apples. Besides, even if I should try there's a dozen fellows in school that could beat me all hollow at speaking."

"That's all right, my *unbrilliant* friend," said

Tick, waving his hand grandiloquently, "but, in this case, our dozen brilliant orators will be unable to appear. Take Pink for instance. Of course, Pink is some eloquent spouter, but Pink has already captured enough honors to satisfy an ordinary mortal and he is going to be so busy with other work in school that he can't possibly take part in the speaking contest."

"I'm beginning to get you," said Pink excitedly, "and I really believe, Tick, that you've struck a scheme that will work. You mean that we'll get all the fellows but Pep to stay out of the speaking contest so that he will have a walkover?"

"No, that wouldn't do exactly," said Tick. "A deal like that would be too raw, but, fortunately, within the realm of our beautiful burg, there are fellows who are even worse speakers than Pep. Take Andy here, for instance."

"Here, cut that idea right out. I ain't never made a speech and I ain't goin' to start," put in Andy.

"Oh, yes, you are, my boy," said Tick confidently. "You are going to be a martyr to the cause. It is not going to hurt you any more to make a speech than it will Pep."

"Why, I'd rather be licked than to get up there and make a speech before all the folks in the town," said Andy.

"Do you mean to tell me that you haven't any loyalty for our famous swatter here, after all he did for you in winning the big ball game?" Tick seemed highly indignant.

"Well, I suppose if it is going to help Pep any in getting to Wingate, I guess I'll have to do it," admitted Andy.

"Now you're talking, son," said Tick. "The whole idea is to pick out a couple more fellows like you who, we are dead certain, are going to be even poorer speakers than Pep, and then all the brilliant orators, like myself and Pink, will stay on the side lines and watch Pep win in a walk."

"Well, we'll have to say you are some brilliant little orator," admitted Pink, "and I, for one, think your scheme is a dandy."

"Sure," said Andy, "and now that we've settled that small detail, let's go on with our celebration. 'Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee jest and youthful jollity,' as my old friend, John Milton, was wont to remark, which, being interpreted for you lowbrows, means, 'bring on the good eats,

crack a few jokes and let's make the welkin ring with mirth and song.' "

There was no hitch in Tick's plan, so far as getting the fairly good speakers not to enter the prize contest; but he did have to use quite a bit of persuading to get enough of the poorer speakers to enroll so that the teachers and others would not suspect that it was a put-up job.

A few days after the celebration, however, Tick met Pink and Pep walking on the street, with a rather serious bit of news.

"Say, fellows," he greeted them, "what do you suppose that shrimp of an Eddie Sweet is doing? He's trying to throw a monkey wrench in our scheme. He's entering the speaking competition and he says he is going to win it, if it takes a hind leg, because he's mad at Pep Pindar and he would do anything to get the best of him. Now, while Eddie is not an elocutionary star, yet he is a shark at memorizing things and I'll bet he'll pick out a piece that will put it over the one you've picked out—'Casey at the Bat.'

"Still," Tick continued, "we'll beat him at that if Pink stays right by you and keeps drilling you at it all the while. Don't you get scared and if

you only catch the spirit of the thing I believe we'll win."

"Of course, we'll win," said Pink. "It's a cinch."

"It's no cinch," said Pep, "but just the same I feel better since Eddie's coming into it than I did before."

"What do you mean, feel better?"

"Well, I dunno exactly, but it seemed too much like stealing candy from a blind baby the way we had the thing planned. But now that Eddie is in it, it makes it more like a real game."

"Say, there's something in that," said Tick. "I believe that's going to be the very thing that will make you put the snap in your speech that has been so woefully lacking heretofore."

At this point Andy Conklin and a couple of other fellows came up. Tick outlined the situation. Andy Conklin had another idea to suggest.

"I've got a scheme," said Andy. "One of us will pick a fuss with Sweetie and get him in a scrap and give him a black eye. Then he will be too proud to appear before the public."

"That's a good idea," said both of the other boys. "Let me pick a fuss with him."

"Nothing doing on that line," objected Pep promptly. "I'm going to win this fight fairly, or we'll lose it. To tell the truth, fellows, I have been feeling sort o' sneaking mean because of our trying to work that put-up job all along."

"Well, if you feel you are really going to win it, Pep, I believe you will," encouraged Tick.

The days following, up to the time of the prize speaking contest, were days of mingled misery, desperation and hope for Pep. The Baptist preacher was helping coach him in his recitation and Pink was also acting as a drill-master. Pink was so determined that there was going to be no slip up on Pep's getting to Wingate that he fairly haunted Pep and kept him repeating his recitation until Pep felt that he could say it backwards and acrossways almost as easily as in its regular order.

But the reports were that Eddie was making splendid progress under the coaching of Miss Bronson, who was not only a teacher of music but also gave private lessons in elocution. In fact, the speaking contest was largely due to Miss Bronson's efforts and each year she donated the two books that were awarded as prizes.

The Public Speaking Prize Contest always drew

a big crowd, but, as it became noised about that Pep Pindar, the star baseball player of the town, was going to be one of the leading speakers, not only the people in the town but the people on the farms for miles around flocked into the village on the evening of the event.

About the only person in town who was unable to attend was Pop Murray. It almost broke his heart, but, unfortunately, the attack of fever which had compelled Pop to quit the ball field had left him in a condition where, occasionally, if he caught cold, he would have a severe recurrence of chills and ague. One of these periodic attacks confined him to his home over the garage on the night of the grand occasion.

Pop was not seriously ill but still was confined to his bed, so late that night, just as soon as the speaking competition was over, Pep and Pink came to visit him and tell him the news.

"Well, laddies, I see by your faces that you've won, all right," Pop greeted them.

"We surely did," said Pink. "It wasn't exactly a walkover but we brought home the bacon, just the same. Show him your prize book, Pep."

And at this, Pep sheepishly produced a book

bound in bright blue cloth and tied with a pink ribbon on which there was a card bearing the inscription:

"TO THE FIRST PRIZE WINNER, BOYS' SPEAKING CONTEST, EAST WINGATE UNION SCHOOL"

Pop slowly spelled out the title:

"The Manual of Good Manners. Rules of Etiquette and Deportment for the Perfect Gentleman in Polite Society. By Gwendolyn Cook."

"Well! Well! It is some prize, I'd say, and a book that ought to do you a lot of good, Pep."

"It certainly is just the thing he needs, as I have been telling him right along," agreed Pink.

"What do you think, Pop, this fellow hasn't appreciated the value of that prize yet? Why, that book will be the making of him. Look at the pictures in it. It tells you exactly how to put on and take off your evening clothes and even how to fold them up. Tells you what to do when you propose marriage and what to say when the girl says 'no,' and what to do when she says 'yes.' Yes siree, that book is going to be the making of Pep Pin-

dar. Pretty soon, I suppose, he'll get out some calling cards, engraved with his full name, Paul Everett Pindar, which most folks have forgotten, and all the society folks of East Wingate will be referring to him as *The Perfect Gentleman*."

"Oh, cut out your kidding," said Pep, "and go on and tell Pop about the contest. That's what we came over for."

"That's right, me lad. Tell me all about it. I'm dying to know. Did Pep really make a wonderful speech?"

"We—el, I don't know as I would exactly call it *wonderful*," admitted Pink, "yet, on the whole, he did credit to his instructors. There was once or twice I thought he was slipping, but he bucked up all right and took a fresh grip and pulled through without any really bad break. I sat right down in front where I could give him the strong eye the minute I saw him tripping, for I had made up my mind that if he fell down, after all the time and worry I have spent teaching him the art of elocution, I was going to take him out behind the church sheds and give him a good trimming."

"Yes, you would!" said Pep. "You couldn't trim a hedge."

"Well, the preliminary speeches were not so much," continued Pink, ignoring the interruption. "The girls did fairly well, though, and Julia Conklin sort of redeemed the family honor by winning the first prize for the girls. But Andy surely did give her an awful handicap.

"But the way that boy Andy sweat and stuck to his speech surely was a wonder. At least eight different times he got stuck, but he repeated a few lines and took a fresh hold, got going again and managed to stick to the finish, although it wasn't exactly a grand stand finish. I tell you, a fellow that makes a sacrifice like that deserves some big favor, Pep, and I believe you ought to let Andy have the loan of that book of yours about half of the time."

"Oh, go on," said Pep again. "Tell your story and cut out the side talk."

"They mixed them up, you know, first a boy and then a girl and Pep was the fourth boy to speak. The two other fellows didn't do very much better than Andy, although I don't think any of them quite came near Andy's record of eight errors in a single inning."

"What are you talking about, the speaking contest or baseball?" asked Pep.

"Oh, that's a mere figure of speech," answered Pink grandly. "Something you will learn more about when you take your next course in elocutionary training."

"There's going to be no further course for me," said Pep grimly. "You can count me as graduated in that subject. Gee, I wouldn't go through another experience and make another speech to win a scholarship in Yale University."

"But suppose they gave you a chance to play on the Yale baseball nine. Then, wouldn't you make another speech?" inquired Pink.

"Oh, go on an' finish your story," said Pep.

"Well, as I have already told you," continued Pink, addressing Pop, "our young Pep fairly did credit to his gifted instructors—meaning myself and the Reverend Mr. Fletcher, of course—and I was pretty sure he had the prize cinched until Eddie Sweet got up to make his speech.

"Right from the start it was evident that Eddie was going to leave no stone unturned. He was going to go after the prize on the points of appearance and on every other thing that goes to make up the perfect speaker. He had on a brand new pair of patent leather pumps, some new lavender silk socks and a pair of bright pink Boston

garters. But I'll tell you more about that later.

"Eddie had decided that he was going to take no chances and he was going to win by giving quantity as well as quality in his speech. Pep, here, you know, picked out that poem, 'Casey at the Bat,' not only because it was about baseball, a subject that he has some slight knowledge of, but also because it was about the shortest piece he could find."

"It was long enough," put in Pep.

"Well, it answered the purpose, but, as I was saying, Eddie wasn't going to take any chance by not giving the folks their money's worth, so he picked out a long, romantic poem, called 'The Sweet Singer of Seville.' It was all about some girl who lived down in a Spanish town of Seville having a lot of trouble with her sweetheart.

"She must have been a vampish sort of a dame and as pretty as a pippin, I'd say, because the first verse that Eddie recited told about her locks of raven hue and her ruby lips and her sparkling eyes and all that sort of thing.

"Well, it seems this fair maiden, as the poem went, gets sort of sweet towards a young man who comes traveling through the town. The poem

called him a cavalier. But this cavalier fellow must have been a little slow, because he didn't fall for the fair maiden's charms right away.

"I almost forgot to say that her chief talent was singing. I suppose that is one reason why Eddie picked out the piece about her. She was all the while trying to charm this cavalier fellow, twanging her guitar and singing and also casting goo-goo eyes at him and vamping him, every chance she got. But he must have been sort of a hard-boiled egg, so far as the girls are concerned, because the poem brought out that he gave her the cold shoulder and kept right on at his work, whatever he was doing. After a while, the fair maiden gets pretty much peeved about the proposition and so, after about the sixteenth verse, she gets into a fuss with him. She goes to see him and starts to read him the riot act.

"Eddie was going so strong up to this time that I was beginning to feel pretty shaky about the prize. But, as the poet says, 'Fortune always favors the brave,' and even if the scheme we fellows fixed up didn't work out altogether, Providence stepped in to help us.

"As I was saying, Eddie gets along to where

this dame was having a fuss with the fellow she wants for a sweetheart and she begins to hand it out to him pretty hot and heavy. Then Eddie came to a line in which it says:

" 'The fair maid stamped her dainty foot.'

"Of course, you know, Eddie is right there with the gestures, so, naturally, when he came to this line, he lifted up one of his patent leather pumps and gave it a stamp on the stage. Tick Wood almost made a lot of us fellows laugh out loud by whispering:

" 'Some hoof-shaker that dame must have been, if she had a foot anything like Sweetie's.'

"Well, the first stamp evidently didn't effect the cavalier fellow very much, because she kept right on talking and, pretty soon, the poet tells that:

" 'Again with rage she stamped her foot.'

"Eddie evidently thought that stamping it with rage meant putting a little more snap into it, so he brought his foot down pretty hard.

"About this time, some of the fellows up in the

front row began to snicker a little bit and as I took a look to see what was up, I saw that in his helping the fair maiden to stamp her foot, Eddie had shaken loose one of his pink Boston garters and that it was hanging around his foot. Likewise, his lavender sock was coming down. Right then and there, I began to feel that maybe our cause wasn't lost yet, because you know how Eddie is about clothes. If there's a thing about his clothes that isn't exactly right, it effects him more than anything else that could happen.

"But, if he suspicioned that anything was wrong, he kept right on spouting poetry. Evidently the second time the maiden stamped her foot caused the cavalier fellow to begin to take a little notice, because right there the cavalier fellow began to make a few remarks and pretty soon he was saying a few things to the beautiful maid, because, after another verse or two, there came a line:

" 'The maiden paused, with downcast eye.'

"And, of course, Eddie had to show exactly how she did it, and when he cast his eyes down, the first thing he noticed was the boys in the front row

snickering and the next was his pink garter and his lavender sock dangling around his foot.

"Well, whatever it was that made the maiden pause, I have forgotten, but that horrifying sight certainly made Eddie pause, so he repeated:

" 'The maiden paused and with downcast eye.'

"And then, after hemming and hawing, he repeated:

" 'The maiden paused . . . '

"Still again he stumbled on:

" 'The maiden paused . . . '

"After giving the maiden one more pause, Eddie dashed madly off the stage and, believe me, the house broke loose. In fact, it was beginning to break before Eddie left the platform.

"Well, that's about all there was to it, except that the Baptist preacher made the usual announcement of the judges' decision and, of course, gave the first prize to our noble orator, Pep Pin-

dar. When he handed out the book, he made some crack about it being valued, not only for its intrinsic merit, but also that it would always be a reminder of a memorable occasion."

"You bet it will," ejaculated Pep. "I'm going to keep that book all right, because I'll say it was some memorable occasion. Do you know, all through my speech I was just as sure, every minute, that my knees were shaking so that everybody in the place could see it?"

"Well, I guess they did shake a bit at that," said Pink, "but all that is over and now we have got the prize and, of course, your father will let you go to Wingate. Did he say anything to you about it?"

"Yes, he did, and I really think father's about as glad to have me go as I am to go. In fact, I think he sort of wanted me to go all the while, but after he thought out that scheme it was just like him to stick to it."

"Well, boys, you certainly did fine and I congratulate you both," said Pop, the tears almost rolling down his cheeks from laughing at Pink's story of the affair. "I'd given anything to have been there, but to know you have won and to hear

you tell about it so well has done me a lot of good."

Thereupon the boys bade him good night and departed to their homes.

CHAPTER V

PEP AND HIS CHUMS ENTER WINGATE ACADEMY

THERE was no unusual happening during the summer vacation, except that Pep worked with exceptional diligence on his father's farm. Pep had never been able to find a great deal of fun in farming. But, being so pleased with the prospect of entering Wingate Academy in the fall, and, as Father Pindar seemed to be taking a little more interest in his son and showing a little more friendliness towards him, Pep really put a lot of zest and energy into his summer work.

Of course there were the usual Sunday School picnics and other outings and social affairs and the boys got a chance to enjoy quite a few baseball games, although they played no games of special importance. At the Sunday School picnic game, however, Pep, with his customary vigor,

slammed out a long fly and lost the ball in the grove in which the picnic was held. This, of course, caused some caustic comment, because, unfortunately, no one had thought to bring along a second ball, consequently the game was broken up.

On the day that Wingate opened, Pop Murray took a day off and drove Pink, Andy, Pep, Tick and Willie Peters over to Wingate in his biggest touring car. The boys were all planning to board in one of the dormitories at Wingate, intending usually to come home over the week-ends.

Previously, they had visited the Academy grounds. Likewise they had already enrolled with the school authorities and made arrangements for their lodging in the dormitory which was called Benton Hall.

Tick and Pep were paired off as room-mates and Andy and Pink were lucky enough to obtain an adjoining room. Wingate Academy was situated just on the outskirts of the little city of Wingate, which boasted a population of about seven thousand. The Academy was rather an old and not so very large institution, its total number of students being less than three hundred. In fact, it was less than half the size of its chief rival,

Lakewood Military Academy. There were only five principal buildings in the Academy group, although several of the teachers lived in cottages on or near the Academy grounds.

The buildings consisted of two long and rather low dormitories; the main building, containing the auditorium, in the back basement of which was the gymnasium. There were two other smaller buildings, one called the Hall of Science and the other the Hall of Languages.

These five buildings formed a quadrangle, the two dormitories running along the sides, the auditorium at one end and the two other buildings at the other end. The buildings were almost hidden in a grove of mighty elms and beautiful maples.

At the rear of the buildings, at the bottom of a small hill which sloped down to the Susquehanna River, was the athletic field which, of course, was the principal point of interest to our friends.

After stowing their things away in their rooms the boys bade good-bye to Pop and started out to hunt up the registrar and arrange their schedule of studies.

Upon arriving at the registrar's rooms, however, they found that there was such a big line of

boys in waiting that they decided to take a stroll down to the athletic field first. There was quite a bunch of boys on the field, each engaged in the sport which appealed to him. Several were racing around the half-mile running track which encircled the field. Several other groups were tossing and kicking footballs, while quite a considerable number were engaged in various baseball practices, some pitching and catching and one fellow batting out flies to quite a group of boys in the field. Few of the players were in any sort of uniform and there was no regularity to their playing. They were evidently simply amusing themselves just to kill time. The vast majority, however, were standing around watching the antics and plays of the others. Of course, there was the usual good-natured chaff and greeting between fellows who were acquainted with each other and Pep could not help blushing and the other boys feeling pride, because quite a number of the boys recognized him.

His size made him a conspicuous figure and, as most of the boys at Wingate came from the farms and nearby villages, naturally Pep's work in the diamond had been observed by a good many of them.

"There goes Pep Pindar, the fellow from East Wingate who knocked so many home runs," one boy whispered loud enough for our fellows to hear, causing Pep's blushes to increase and the other boys to rather strut with pride at their being the chums of such a well-known character.

Pretty soon two of the players stopped and strolled over to the boys. Pink and Pep remembered one of the fellows, Doc Tupper, who had been one of the star players of the Wingate Academy nine during the previous season. As Doc advanced, he greeted them:

"Hello, Pindar. Glad to see you with us and I also remember your friend here," turning to Pink, "but don't just recall his name. I want you to meet Jack Duffy, who is the captain of our football team. The minute Jack saw Pindar he insisted on my coming right over, because the one thing that Jack is after this fall is to get more beef for his team."

Pep rather awkwardly introduced his chums and Duffy said:

"You surely must come out for football, Pindar. As Doc says, we are up against it this fall for weight on our team and Doc tells me that you are a mighty good baseball player, so I am sure that,

with your weight, you can make the eleven all right," as he admiringly appraised Pep's well-built, husky form, "and I believe you are going to be a big addition to our team."

"I hadn't thought much about playing football," said Pep. "You see, baseball is more in my line."

"We fellows over at East Wingate never went in much for football," Pink explained. "Of course, some of us have fooled around with it more or less, but we have been in the habit of playing baseball in the fall as well as in the spring."

"Well, you won't get much chance at baseball in the fall here at Wingate," said Doc, "although we keep up quite a few practice games in order to keep our hands in. You see, the athletics here in our school is run by a regular athletic council, which is composed of both teachers and students. They sort of arrange things so that one branch of athletics doesn't interfere with the others. In the fall the main excitement is football, basketball during the winter, and then the baseball starts in the spring. So you see you will have plenty of time to play football, only I want you to take mighty good care that you don't let any of these

football sharks hurt that batting wing of yours, because we surely do expect to need it next spring when we are going out after the championship. The boys have elected me baseball captain and as this is my last year at Wingate, of course I want to turn out a champion nine.

"I believe you play also," said he, turning to Pink. Before he could reply, Pep answered:

"Yes, you bet he plays, and he is a good deal better player than I am, except that he may not be able to hit 'em out quite so heavy."

"Aw, go on, quit your kidding," blushed Pink, but Doc went on:

"Well, you surely look like a good player. I think you'll have a pretty good chance to make the nine. What's your position?"

"I have been captain and catcher for the East Wingate team."

"Say, have you fellows been up to see Tommy and got your study courses arranged?" suddenly exclaimed Jack.

"Who's Tommy?" asked Pink.

"Oh, that's the name that the boys give to Professor Thomas, who is the head of the English department. He is in charge of arranging the

schedules. He's sort of a first assistant or right-hand man to old June Bug." As the boys guessed, this was also a nickname given to the principal of the Academy, Dr. Junius Bugbee.

"How are you when it comes to books? Got any boners among you?"

"What's a boner?" Pink inquired.

"Why, it's a fellow who knows more about books than he does about anything else, sort of a bookworm."

"Well, we've got one with us all right," grinned Ping as he pointed to Tick. "This bird may look small to you, but he's big stuff when it comes to books. He simply eats 'em up. He will take a book and in two hours will know more about it than the fellow who wrote it."

"Aw, shut off your gas, Pink!" Tick growled.

"But how about our friend, Pep?" inquired Doc, smiling. "Is he there with the book stuff, too?"

Pep blushed and Pink shouted gleefully:

"Not so you could notice it! In fact, Pep is about what you might call a perfect contrast for Tick. In everything that Pep is big in, Tick is small in, and in everything that Tick is small in,

Pep is big in. In fact, aside from winning the championship as the silver-tongued orator of our town, we can't exactly say that Pep has ever distinguished himself in the educational world."

"Silver-tongued orator?" inquired Jack. "Gee, if that's so he must join our debating club." But as the East Wingate boys were grinning, he asked, "Is he really a good speaker?"

Despite Pep's protestations, Pink insisted on relating the story of the prize speaking contest.

The boys now returned to the school building and, after waiting in line for a while longer, were able to get their interview with "Tommy," who, after asking their names, drew forth their enrollment blanks, which contained information as to their previous record in East Wingate School.

Pep was the last one to have an interview with "Tommy" and the other boys were obliged to wait around outside quite a while before he came out. When he came forth he looked as though his best friend had just died. Without parley, he broke the sad news to the fellows.

"Say, what do you suppose that 'prof' says I've got to do? He says that in order to play baseball or football or be on any of the regular

athletic teams, I have got to maintain an average standing of eighty-five per cent, and never fall below seventy-five on any subject."

CHAPTER VI

POP MURRAY, THE VETERAN PITCHER, DELIVERS A FEW STRAIGHT ONES

TO SAY that the information given out by Professor Thomas, regarding the educational qualifications that the Academy insisted that its first team athletes must maintain, was a heavy blow to Pep states the case too mildly. Indeed, Pep considered it a complete knockout. Looking at it in whichever way he tried, he felt that it was an absolutely impossible obstacle to overcome. He recalled how difficult it had been for him to reach the sixty per cent passing mark which had been the required standing at East Wingate. In fact, several times he had fallen below the necessary sixty per cent and had been obliged to take the same subject over again.

As the boys walked back to their rooms and then as they sat around discussing the situation,

they said everything they possibly could to cheer Pep up and make him see that the situation was not hopeless. Both Tick and Pink agreed that they would continue to coach him in his studies the same as they had been doing at East Wingate, and they both seemed to feel confident that, even though it was going to be a pretty serious proposition, yet it was by no means impossible.

But Pep could not see it that way. He felt that all his visions of fame on the ball field had been cast down by, what he considered, an unfair rule.

The boys insisted on dragging him out to a get-acquainted reception that was held in the school auditorium that evening. It was a hilarious affair, but Pep took no part in the fun, although Pink and Tick soon were right in their element. Pep moped around and answered everyone who said anything to him in monosyllables until Doc Tupper took Pink aside and said to him:

"Say, where did that chum of yours get his nickname? He's got about as much pep as a corpse. The fellows have been hearing a lot about him and they were expecting that he would turn out to be some punkins. But he acts as though he was old Chief Gloom himself."

"Oh, you mustn't mind that to-night," Pink explained earnestly. "Pep is not his regular self, as he has just received a pretty sad piece of news which has badly upset him. If you will only tip off the fellows, I'll tell you all about it later."

Then, as the boys realized that Pep's moping at the party might seriously injure his reputation and future standing at the school among the boys, they decided to go home early in order to get him out of the way.

Pep immediately went to bed, but not to sleep. All night long he tossed in his bed, worrying over the problem. Since he had put forth what he considered such tremendous efforts to gain the chance to come to Wingate and then, the first day at school, for all his hopes and prospects to be upset, surely was a terrible discouragement. But, finally, he concluded that the one thing for him to do was to go back home and stay on the farm with his father. Of course he realized this course was going to cause him deep humiliation in addition to being a bitter disappointment to his greatest ambition.

However, as he dropped into a fitful sleep towards morning, he made up his mind that before

he definitely decided the question, he would go back to East Wingate and have a talk with Pop Murray. He found a little hope in the thought that Pop had been able to show the boys how to pull themselves out of some pretty big holes and overcome some pretty big obstacles. This hope so lessened his worries that he finally sank into slumber.

The first two days at Wingate were devoted entirely to getting the students properly registered and scheduled in their classes. So the next morning Pep took the nine o'clock train back to East Wingate.

When he showed up at the garage, Pop was, of course, greatly surprised, but he read in Pep's face that something serious was troubling him. At once Pop dropped the work in which he was engaged and took Pep into his back room. Never in his life, since he was a little shaver, had Pep felt so near to actually weeping as Pop patted him on the back and said, "Now, laddie, tell me what it's all about and remember that there's few things broke so bad that they can't be mended and what can't be cured can always be endured."

"I've got to quit Wingate," blurted out Pep.

"What?" Pop exclaimed in amazement, "you've got to quit almost before you've started? Why, what's the trouble, lad?"

Then Pep explained the scholastic requirements for athletes.

"Well! Well!" said Pop musingly, "so that's all your trouble is, is it, and you're going to throw up the game just because you think you have no chance of beating it?"

"Well, what chance do I have?" asked Pep. "Just see how unfair it is when a fellow can go through school and graduate, if he only passes seventy-five. But, if he wants to play on any team in baseball or football or basketball or anything, they make him get an extra ten points. Why, it looks just as though they don't want anybody but their star students to have any part in athletics."

"Hold on, me lad," said Pop soothingly. "Now let's get the right of this. Probably the school folks have their own reasons for making their rules. We mustn't forget that the main purpose of the Academy is to teach the boys things that they find in books, rather than the things that they can learn on the ball field. The books come first and the games and sports must come second.

Maybe if you put it the other way round and made the sports come first, the Wingate Academy wouldn't have the good reputation it has and folks wouldn't be so apt to want their boys to go there, because, Pep, my lad, most parents are like your own daddy; they don't care so much about having their son become a champion athlete as they do to have him be a good student. But the big question is, why must *you* lay down when there's dozens of other boys who are able to keep up to the school rule and have their fun in the games just the same. Surely, Pep, you're not a stupid lad."

"Well, maybe I am not stupid," admitted Pep, "but it's harder for me to learn things than it is for other fellows, like Pink and Tick. I simply hate studying."

"So, ho! That's how it stands!" murmured Pop. "You want to play baseball and get to be a big star but you ain't willing to pay the price. Pep, me laddie, suppose when you were playing in a game with a big champion nine against you and you were pitching and they got three men on the bags and nobody out. What would you do? Holler to the captain to pull you out of the box, or would you go right on and pitch your hardest?"

"Of course, I would pitch my hardest," Pep promptly replied. "You know I would."

"Sure, I know you would and that's what I think you ought to do now. My boy, there's a good many things in life that is like playing baseball. The baseball school is about the only school I had a chance to go to and while I picked up a pretty fair knowledge of things in general, yet it has been the big sorrow of my life that I ran away from home when I was a wee laddie and never had a chance to get much of the knowledge that you get in schools and in books. I never got into any of the big leagues, but I have learned a good deal about ball players, and I tell you, Pep, that even if it is your big ambition to be a great player some day, there is nothing like having a good education to fall back on when your days on the diamond are over. Ball playing is a pretty vigorous life and most of the ball players can't stand the pace more than a few years. Then those that were fools like meself, and never had any profession or much education, must come back and take up any job that they can get hold of.

"Of course, you've heard a lot about the big money that ball players earn and there are some

of them that do get the big money, but not all of them by any manner of means. There are lots of them that, when they have finished their ball-playing days, haven't laid up a penny.

"Now, Pep, don't get me wrong. I am not saying a thing against ball playing. I think it is the best game in the world and I don't blame you a bit for your ambition to be a big leaguer. I hope you'll win and I really think you will. But ball playing isn't going to be your whole life and all the more book learning you can get into your head will make you a better ball player and, most of all, will give you something solid to fall back on when your playing days are over.

"Now, there's something else I want to point out to you, Pep, me lad," continued the old man, going to some shelves in one corner of the room and taking down a little book bearing upon its cover the title, "Lives and Records of Famous Baseball Players." Opening the pages he said:

"This gives the records of the biggest baseball players in the country. Now let me show you something about the fellows that are *the* real star players. For instance, Pep, who do you count as the biggest player in the big leagues?"

"Christy Mathewson, of course," said Pep promptly.

"All right, the book says Christy Mathewson started his baseball career in Keystone Academy at Factoryville, Pennsylvania, and then in Bucknell University in 1899. Suppose you name another big star in the game."

"Cactus Cravath," said Pep, after a moment's thought, the name probably coming to him because Cravath was making some sensational home runs on the Philadelphia team that season. After thumbing the pages of the book and reading a moment, Pop said:

"Well, I guess that's one for you, because the record don't tell about Cactus starting at college, although he was quite a famous player when a boy on the school teams of his home town, San Diego, California. All right, name me another!"

"Tris Speaker," said Pep, thinking he was beginning to get on to what Pop was driving at.

"All right," said Pop after turning a few pages. "Tris Speaker started his baseball career in 1905 at Fort Worth Polytechnic Institute. Name another!"

"Harry Hooper of the Red Sox," ventured Pep.

"Won his fame as a pitcher with St. Mary's College of San Francisco," Pop read.

"Dutch Leonard," Pep named next.

After a moment's search, "Ah, ha!" said Pop, "you've picked another St. Mary's College player. He came direct from St. Mary's College of San Francisco to the Red Sox in 1911, says the book."

"Eddie Murphy," was Pep's next guess, and Pop soon announced:

"Started in 1911 at Villanova College."

"Walter Pipp."

After a second Pop announced briefly:

"Nineteen-eleven and twelve, Georgetown University."

"Jim Thorpe, the Indian," said Pep, thinking this time he was going to score, but Pop triumphantly announced:

"Carlisle College." Closing the book, Pop said, "Well, Pep, do you see what I've been trying to drive home to you? Most of the star players in the major leagues have come either from big schools or colleges and this is getting to be more and more so every year.

"The great baseball clubs send out men that they call scouts to hunt for promising ball players

and these scouts are giving more and more time to looking over the work of the boys in colleges and in the big schools. I guess the reason is because the managers have found that it takes something besides muscle to win ball games and that the more education and the more brains a lad has the better ball player he is likely to be."

Pep offered no comment, but was evidently doing some pretty heavy thinking. After a few moments' silence, Pop continued:

"Now, Pep, me lad, do you see just what you've been doing? You're laying down and you're quitting and never in my life did I think of you, Pep, as a quitter."

Stung to the core, Pep denied, "I'm not a quitter! I never laid down in a game in my life!"

"Well, then, what are you doing? You're giving up because you think you can't keep up to the rules of the school and yet you haven't really tried to do it. What do the other boys say about it?"

"Well, Tick and Pink think that I could pull through all right, if I studied hard enough, and say they would help me a whole lot all the while," admitted Pep reluctantly.

"There you are!" said Pop triumphantly.

"Your friends have more confidence in you than you have in yourself." Then, coming over and laying his hands affectionately on Pep's shoulder, he continued:

"Now, me lad, I'm getting along in years and I've no kin of me own. So about the only comfort that I can take in my old age is to think that now and then I've helped a young lad by giving him a bit of good advice, and, right now, Pep, I think I am giving you the best advice that I could possibly give to any boy, even if he was my own son. Go back to your school, my boy! Make up your mind that you are going to get through with those studies and keep up with the record if you have to work as you never worked before. I believe you can do it and the other boys believe you can do it, and you *can* do it if you'll really try. Some day, I expect to hear about you making a big name for yourself on the diamond. Maybe you'll get with one of the major leagues; but, Pep, I don't believe you'll ever do it if you ain't got the grit to stick to your guns and pay the price of your future success right now!

"I'm thinking, Pep, that what you decide to-day,

in the next few minutes, means whether you're going to spend your life bumming around in bush league baseball or whether you're going right straight through to the top." After several moments of deep silence, Pop asked quietly:

"And now, what are you going to do, my boy?"

"I am going back to school," said Pep slowly, "and I'm going to try my very best."

"Don't just *try*, my boy, but say to yourself that you're going to do it in spite of everything and then you will do it. Nothing can stop you if you make up your mind you're going to stick to it, no matter what happens. It's this sticking stuff that counts in winning baseball games as well as in winning all the other games of life."

So Pep took the next train back to Wingate and had a pretty serious conversation with the boys, although his chums were thoroughly confident that Pep was bound to win out.

"You're going to make that eighty-five per cent grade," said little Tick, "if I have to climb right inside your hide and do your thinking for you."

"Well, if you could get inside of Pep's hide, I'm afraid you would rattle around a bit," grinned Pink, "but, believe me, Pep, my boy, you're not

going to fall down on the book side of the proposition with Tick and me backing you up."

It was decided that Pep would have to forego any idea of football, in order to get a good start in his lessons, but this caused him no especial sorrow, because his interest in baseball was so great that he cared very little whether he played any other games or not.

CHAPTER VII

EDDIE SWEET SEEKS REVENGE FOR HIS BUSTED STRAW HAT

PEP's chums arranged a regular schedule for coaching him in his studies. As he was taking exactly six subjects the boys divided their labors equally, Tick being responsible for Pep's progress in history, English and first year Latin, while Pink, who was better in mathematics and science, was Pep's coach in algebra, physics and geology. Tick was an unusually methodical youth and, although the youngest of the trio, acted as director of the arrangements. Some of the boys, after they became acquainted with the situation, added a new nickname and called him "Prof. Wood Tick."

But the little bookworm didn't mind the chaffing as he was always able to hold his own in any joshing contest, and even Pink admitted that "when it comes to slinging the English language, Tick has us all skinned a mile."

So Tick insisted upon a rigid adherence to the schedule of two hours in the early morning and two hours every evening. At first Pep was inclined to give up all athletics in order to devote himself entirely to his studies, but Tick soon convinced him of the folly of such a plan, although it was agreed he should not attempt to enter any of the teams. But he kept in good trim by playing scrub baseball and also playing football on his class team and, occasionally, considerable basketball, besides participating in the regular gymnasium classes.

During the first few weeks of the schedule, there were several times when Pep was almost ready to throw up the sponge. It was the hardest task he had ever attempted in his life. It was not that he was at all stupid, but in some way or other he had developed an inborn hatred for study. Yet every time he had the slightest inclination to quit, the scene in Pop Murray's garage would arise before him and he would seem to hear Pop's kindly voice ringing in his ears. Then he would pull himself together, grit his teeth and buckle down to the task more resolutely than ever.

He really made fine progress in every subject

excepting Latin. One thing Pep has never been able to understand, even to this day, was how a boy who seemed to be otherwise reasonably intelligent should actually delight in studying Latin, which was the case with Tick. Probably it was largely due to the fact that Tick took a most enthusiastic interest in the study of languages, especially Latin, that he was able to keep Pep's marks up to the standard. Possibly an additional fact that helped some was that "Tommy," the head of the school of languages, was also an enthusiastic baseball fan. Not that it is to be inferred that "Tommy" showed any partiality, but evidently his system was to give a good athlete the benefit of the doubt in every recitation or examination.

After several weeks of "Professor Wood Tick's intensive course of training," as Pink had facetiously referred to their task, for the first time in his life Pep had the experience of having teachers actually praise him for his good work in class. It so happened that history had always been the least detestable of any subject that Pep had studied, and as Doctor Bugbee was a remarkable instructor in history who had the knack of connecting those

events of ancient days with certain events and facts in modern life, Pep began actually to enjoy the study of history. And at his first mid-term examination he passed a hundred per cent, and was the leader of his class and received words of praise from "old June Bug" himself right before the whole class.

When the boys had returned to their rooms after this happy event and Pep was inclined to be a little cocky, Tick promptly brought him down to earth by insisting that it was his system of study that was responsible for the results and that most of the credit for the achievement was due to himself, as Pep's coach.

So throughout the first semester everything was going along swimmingly. Each week study was getting less and less difficult for Pep, although he still concentrated a great deal of hate upon Latin and just managed to pull through in that particular subject. But in history, after his first taste of the joys of victory, he was continuing to lead the class and was becoming quite accustomed to an occasional word of praise from Doctor Bugbee.

But, as the proverb of the sailor goes, "When the skies are the brightest, watch out for a storm."

The storm that soon arrived came very near to wrecking Pep's career. The whole thing started away back when Pep knocked the ball through the Baptist meeting-house window and broke Eddie Sweet's hat.

Eddie had never forgiven him for what he considered the mean way Pep had treated him with regard to the hat catastrophe. As Eddie viewed it, it was bad enough to have his hat busted without having the fellow who was responsible for it not only refuse to pay damages, but to add insult to injury by poking fun at him.

Eddie had duly entered Lakewood and was also beginning to win the particular kind of fame that pleased him best. He had won a place as one of the soloists in the Lakewood Academy Glee Club.

During the winter and spring the two Lakewood musical clubs, the Glee Club and the Banjo and Mandolin Club, were accustomed to give entertainments at some of the neighboring towns. Not long after Easter, such an entertainment was given at Wingate. The clubs motored over in two big school busses, together with several other automobiles, and put up at the Fairfax Inn, the most fashionable hotel in the city of Wingate.

While Eddie was lolling around in an easy chair on the portico of the Inn, an East Wingate boy, now attending the Wingate Academy, an old friend of Eddie's, came along and stopped to greet him. After some conversation about folks and events at home and mutual inquiries as to how things were getting along in school and a few mutual aspersions regarding the superiority of their different institutions of learning, the East Wingate boy remarked:

"There isn't any Rule Thirteen in Lakewood Academy, is there?"

"What do you mean, Rule Thirteen?" Eddie inquired.

"Why, I saw you coming out of Aunt Mary's Y. L. S. to-day."

"Aunt Mary's Y. L. S.?" Eddie was still further mystified.

"Yes, that's the name our fellows have given to Miss Mary Gould's Select School for Young Ladies."

"Oh! That's all right. Didn't you know that Clara was attending school there?"

"Oh! That's so!" said the boy. "I'd forgotten that, but even so, sister or no sister, if you

were attending Wingate you would have to get a written permission or they would haul you over the coals for breaking Rule Thirteen."

"What is Rule Thirteen?" inquired Eddie.

"Why, it seems that, a long time ago, there was some sort of a rumpus on account of the Wingate Academy boys 'rushing' the girls over at Miss Gould's School, so the 'profs' at Wingate got together and fixed up a rule, which we fellows call Rule Thirteen. Any Wingate Academy boy who visits Miss Gould's school without a written permission gets thirteen points taken off his deportment record. I don't know just why they made it thirteen, but I suppose the professor who put it through thought it was funny. Anyway, that's why we have always called it Rule Thirteen."

After the boy departed, Eddie sought out some of his Lakewood chums to while away the time until the evening's entertainment. Returning to the Inn, Eddie received another surprise, a rather pleasant one. The day clerk had gone off duty and the new night clerk at the Inn was none other than Jake Snyder, dressed more stylishly than ever, in Eddie's eyes.

It seems that Jake, since his bad break at the ball game, had been behaving himself pretty decently and, as the job of night clerk at the hotel just suited him, he felt pretty good towards himself, in particular, and towards the rest of the world, in general.

He greeted Eddie most cordially and, during the intervals of attending to his duties, they had quite a long chat. Finally Jake brought up a very delicate subject. He explained to Eddie about his present prosperity and felt, now that he was settling down to business and, as he considered it, was making good, he might renew his attentions to Eddie's sister, Clara, of whom he had long been an ardent admirer. Clara, however, had never given him any encouragement, but, of course, as is customary in small towns, had felt obliged to act fairly friendly towards him whenever they were thrown together at social affairs.

Jake proposed that Eddie should carry a note over to his sister, as it was well known that the rules of Miss Gould's select school did not permit the girls to receive correspondence from anyone excepting their parents and all letters were subject to the inspection of teachers.

Eddie had always been a great admirer of Jake and never could understand why Clara would not have anything to do with a man who dressed as elegantly as Jake always did. So he readily consented to be the bearer of the note and, after considerable labor, Jake evolved what he considered was a masterpiece.

The next morning Eddie started out to deliver the note, but, as he was on his way, he suddenly remembered Rule Thirteen and there flashed into his mind, as if by inspiration, a scheme for getting even with Pep Pindar.

Without delivering the note he went back to the hotel and shortly afterwards returned with the automobile crowd to Lakewood.

On the following Sunday, however, Eddie was spending the week end in his home in East Wingate and, after Sunday School, he promptly sought out Pep's sister, Katy, who did not, by any means, share Pep's dislike for Eddie Sweet. On the contrary, Katy was just at that age where a boy who dressed so well, as she thought Eddie did, and who was such a lovely singer and who also paid her considerable homage, appealed to her romantic nature.

Girls, you know, are likely to start their romances much earlier than boys.

Anyway, Eddie, while not a sweetheart or even a "best fellow," yet had paid enough attention to Katy so that frequently she received the chaffing of her friends about it. Therefore, when Eddie sought her out after Sunday School and asked permission to walk home with her, since it was a beautiful day and Mother Pindar could see no harm in young folks enjoying themselves, of course she gave ready consent.

During the walk home, Eddie, without disclosing his sinister purpose, was easily able to make Katy an innocent accessory to his plot. A day or so later, Pep received the following letter from his sister:

DEAR PEP:

We were all disappointed because you couldn't come home Sunday, but, of course, we got your letter saying you were going to visit one of your chums over the week-end. I suppose you will be home next Sunday as usual and maybe you will be surprised to get this letter from me.

But I've got a favor that I want you to do for me and someone else who I think you won't object to helping out.

Eddie Sweet called on us Sunday. Now, of course, it isn't Eddie that I am asking you to do a favor for, because I know you don't like him. You think just because a boy can't play baseball that he isn't much good, but maybe Eddie will surprise you one of these days. I think he is one of the nicest-looking boys in our town and he always dresses so swell, too.

But the favor I want you to do is for Eddie's sister, Clara, and, if you think as much of Clara as you used to, I guess you will be glad to help her out of a little trouble she is having.

Of course, you know how stingy the Sweets are, all excepting Clara. Of course, they like to have their children get everything that is stylish but they don't like to spend their money and so Mr. Sweet has given Clara such a small allowance that she has gotten into trouble at school. It seems she borrowed ten dollars of one of the girls,

thinking she could save up enough of her allowance to pay it back after a while. Then this girl has gotten mad at her for some reason or other that Eddie don't know exactly what it is and so the girl wants the ten dollars paid back right away or else she is going to tell some of the teachers and Clara will get into a lot of trouble.

Now you know that girls at Miss Gould's school are not allowed to receive letters from anybody other than their folks and Clara doesn't dare ask her folks for any more money because she knows that would raise a fuss, so she wrote a note to Eddie and wanted him to loan her the ten dollars and bring it over to her. But Eddie can't get away to do this so he asked me to send the letter with the money to you and he wants you to take it over to Clara.

Now I'm sure you'll do this, buddy, but you have got to do it so nobody will find it out and you mustn't tell a single soul and please do it right away because the mean girl that Clara borrowed the money from is just simply hounding her to death and threatens

to make a fuss with the teachers if she doesn't get her money right away.

Love from all the folks and from your loving sister,

KATY.

As Katy's letter intimated, Pep, although he had never, as yet, been deeply interested in any member of the fair sex, had always nursed a secret admiration for Clara Sweet. In fact, he had often wondered how there could be such a nice girl in the same family that produced as poor a specimen of a boy as he considered Eddie to be. So that evening he dressed himself with unusual care and hastened to carry out his sister's instructions. He decided that, on account of the secrecy enjoined by Katy, he ought to use considerable caution in delivering the note.

Therefore, as he arrived at the girls' school, he did not enter and ask to see Clara but strolled up and down the walk, glancing anxiously in through the wide gateway, hoping that, after a while, Clara would come out upon the big lawn, on one side of which were the croquet grounds and on the other side the tennis courts.

Miss Gould's school prided itself on its selectness and, of course, was not a very large institution. The school consisted of one ample building which was not only the dormitory but also contained the class rooms, and in the back was the girls' gymnasium. There was quite a spacious lawn with a large stone fence along the street side and an ornamental iron gateway and a broad walk leading down to the portico of the school.

From time to time, as Pep paced up and down, he would glance anxiously through this gate at the groups of girls who were playing and, after what seemed to him almost years of waiting, Clara came forth, chatting with a group of other girls and carrying a tennis racquet. Immediately Pep darted through the gateway and spoke awkwardly.

"Hello, Clara!"

Detaching herself from the other girls, she came over and said:

"For goodness' sakes, Pep Pindar! What brings you here?"

"I've got a note for you," he whispered and, as they shook hands, he conveyed the note to her as much under cover as possible. Then hurriedly saying, "Well, I must beat it," he started away,

but, on a second thought, he turned and stammered in a whisper, "S-say, Clara, i-if you need any m-more money, why, why just let me know."

"What in the world are you talking about, Pep Pindar? Are you studying so hard that you're going nutty?"

"That's all right. Good night," he said, deciding that Clara wanted even to conceal from him the fact that she was having this trouble about money.

As he came through the gateway upon the sidewalk, he noticed that Doctor Bugbee and Professor Thomas were strolling along on the opposite side of the street, chatting together. As they saw him coming forth, he saw them give a start, but Pep, having never heard about Rule Thirteen, blushed a little and bowed to them and hastened back to the Academy.

CHAPTER VIII

PEP BUMPS UP AGAINST A RULE THAT IS NOT IN THE BASEBALL GUIDE

ON THE following afternoon, at Latin class, after recitation, Professor Thomas said:

“Pindar, will you please arrange to call at Doctor Bugbee’s office this evening at seven-thirty for a special conference?”

“Yes, sir!” said Pep and he left the room considerably disturbed, because all along it had been especially difficult for him to keep up in his Latin class and now he felt sure he must be running behind. He spoke to the boys about it at the evening meal, but Tick felt pretty certain that it was nothing serious, because he was keeping close tabs on Pep’s progress in Latin and he could not see how it was possible for him to be falling behind.

But Latin was not the subject discussed that

evening, when Pep called at "the June Bug's Nest," the term used by the boys to designate Doctor Bugbee's private office. He found Professor Thomas and Doctor Bugbee awaiting him, and, after asking him to be seated, the doctor opened the subject at once by saying:

"Professor Thomas and I thought we saw you coming out of Miss Gould's Select School for Young Ladies last evening about six-thirty."

"Yes, sir!" acknowledged Pep, blushing, but, in his ignorant innocence, rather wondering why they brought up such a subject. Then it flashed through his mind that, perhaps, some of the teachers at Miss Gould's school had seen him delivering the note and that Clara's little fault had been discovered. He was, therefore, rather dismayed at thinking he had bungled.

"I suppose you were calling upon one of the young ladies," remarked the doctor gently. "Have you a sister at Miss Gould's school?"

"Or a cousin?" added Professor Thomas with a smile. "I've noticed that when our boys make requests for permission to visit Miss Gould's school they very frequently state that they wish to call upon a certain cousin. Our boys usually

have a considerable number of cousins in Miss Gould's school."

"No, I haven't any relatives in that school," replied Pep, "and I didn't know you had to get permission before you could go there," he added in surprise at the information Professor Thomas had given.

"So then," put in the doctor, "it seems that you have never heard of what some of our humorous young students call Rule Thirteen?"

"No, sir!" admitted Pep, "I never heard of any such rule."

A look of relief passed over Doctor Bugbee's face as he nodded his head at Professor Thomas as much as to say, "I thought so!" For it must be confessed that, owing considerably to Pep's standing in history, which was more than merely a study with the doctor—it was actually a hobby—he considered Pep as one of his favorite pupils. That is, as near as any principal of a school can possibly indulge in having favorites.

Professor Thomas also was friendly towards Pep, not because he was a bright and shining star in the Latin class, but because of his athletic prowess. But Professor Thomas was a bachelor

and was generally known as sort of a woman hater. He inquired:

"Then of course you won't object to giving the name of the young lady you were calling upon and explaining the object of your visit."

Right away Pep began to see that any explanation of his errand would be almost certain to get Clara into difficulty, so he stammered:

"Well—er—I wasn't calling on anyone in particular. I was just passing by and just looked in."

As it was so obvious that he was not telling the truth, the doctor's face fell.

"Pindar," said he, rather sternly, "I must confess that I am surprised. While in legal realms there is a principle that ignorance of the law is no excuse for crime, yet in our institution we do not exactly follow this legal principle, so I may as well explain to you that the Rule Thirteen that we have spoken about is one of the regulations of the school whereby any student of the Academy who visits Miss Gould's school without written permission from myself or my assistant, Professor Thomas, thereby receives thirteen demerit marks on his department record.

"Now, as I have explained, we are not sticklers

about the legal matters in this case and if you were really ignorant of the ruling and could offer a satisfactory excuse, I have no doubt that, in this case, we might overlook the penalty. But your excuse that you simply looked in, out of what you wish us to believe was idle curiosity, will not pass muster. You will have to give us a better explanation than that or I'm afraid the penalty of thirteen demerit marks will have to be marked up against your record."

Pep was too confused to make very much of a coherent reply, but stammering and blushing, like the man in the court room who, when accused of telling a lie, said, "Well, that's my story and I am going to stick to it," Pep stuck to his rather feeble excuse.

After a few further remarks, during which it was evident that both Doctor Bugbee and Professor Thomas were very much disappointed, Pep was dismissed.

As Pep hurried over to his room he felt anything but dismayed. Of course he did not like the idea of having a poor record in deportment, but, on the whole, he felt he had acted the part of a hero in protecting the honor of a fair maiden. In fact, as he came to his room, he was

in a fairly self-satisfied frame of mind. Doc Tupper, Andy and Pink, and, of course, Tick, were gathered in his room, chatting and chaffing and awaiting his return. As he entered, Pink greeted him:

"Well, what's the verdict? What have you been doing? Are you going to be shot at sunrise or simply hung, drawn and quartered?"

"Oh, it's nothing very much," said Pep, "but why didn't you fellows tell me about that Rule Thirteen before?"

At this Doc Tupper sat up and took notice.

"You don't mean to tell me that you've been over to Miss Gould's School without permission and busted Rule Thirteen?"

"Well, what if I have?" asked Pep, rather defiantly.

"Well, for the love of Mike. Of all the prize boobs I ever ran up against, you certainly take the bun!" exclaimed Doc.

"Great Cæsar's Ghost!" put in Pink, "I thought I knew you and all your faults, which are a-plenty, but this is the first time I ever heard of you trying to be a lady killer. What girl have you been rushing over at the Y. L. S.?"

"It's none of your business," said Pep, begin-

ning to get a little angry, because there was something more than ordinary chaffing behind the tone of the boys. "I just went over there for fun."

"Fun!" yelled Doc. "Say, how many times have you cut chapel this term?"

"Only once," said Pep.

"And how many times have you been late at chapel?"

"I guess about three times, maybe," said Pep. "What of it?"

"What of it?" Doc wailed. "This is what of it, you poor simp. You've simply gone and busted all your chances for playing on the baseball team."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Pep. "The fellows said a fellow had a right to cut chapel four times during the term."

"That's all right for a fellow who isn't fool enough to go and bust Rule Thirteen. What the fellows meant was that you get three marks off every time you cut chapel. So if you behave yourself otherwise, you can manage to cut chapel four times and still keep up your deportment standing."

"But you not only cut three marks off every time you cut chapel, but one mark every time you are tardy at chapel, so you already have at least six

demerits against you in deportment and now you've added thirteen, which leaves you a deportment standing of only eighty-one, losing out by just four points. Of all the boobs!"

"You don't mean to say——"

"Yes, I do! That's just exactly what I mean to say. That your deportment record in Wingate stands just the same, so far as playing on any first team, as your school record. You've got to maintain eighty-five points in deportment as well as an average of eighty-five in all of your studies or you can't play on any first team."

"Hadn't you ever heard anything about Rule Thirteen before?" asked Pink.

"No, I hadn't," said Pep sullenly.

"Well, then, I'll bet, if you go over and tell the doctor all about it and tell him you didn't know and tell him why you happened to go over to the Y. L. Seminary, why he will let you off. The doc's a good old scout and he certainly likes you because of the work you've been doing in the history class."

"Sure," said Doc, "I believe you're right, Pink. I think, maybe, we can fix the thing up all right after all. All Pep will have to do is to tell the

name of the girl he went to call upon and why he went there and then I'm pretty sure the doctor will let him off."

"Who said I went to see a girl?" asked Pep belligerently. "And it's none of your business if I did and I'm not going to explain anything to the doctor."

At this outburst, the fireworks certainly broke loose in Pep's room. His friends started, in a chorus, to point out, with the usual school-boy emphasis, just how big a jackass he was making of himself. But Pep was obdurate and, after a while, simply buried himself in a book and refused either to talk or to listen.

From that day on an atmosphere of gloom surrounded Pep and his friends. Feeling certain, in his own mind, that he was pursuing the right course, Pep would not offer one word of explanation and refused, furthermore, to discuss the proposition with anyone. He took the dropping out of the baseball team almost stoically, but, instead of dropping back in his studies, he put forth redoubled effort in this direction. He became even more of a bookworm than little Tick.

Of course, Pink and Tick still continued coach-

ing him in his studies, because both of them were hopeful that some way would finally be discovered which would solve the problem. They could not understand what was behind it all, because, as both of them had always known Pep from his kid days, they knew that he had never been a "girl chaser," so they felt certain that there must be some peculiar reason for his visit to Miss Gould's school. All of Pep's friends were constantly on the search for clues to the mystery.

Meanwhile the baseball season was opening, and as Doc Tupper desired Pep to still continue practicing with the team, he did so. Doc, like Pink and Tick, was hoping that something might turn up that would remove the ban and give Pep a chance to play. But several games had already been played with various schools and still Pep continued gloomy and silent and the mystery surrounding his breaking of Rule Thirteen seemed no nearer solution than before.

Wingate had been a fairly easy winner of the four games that had already been played because these games had been with the weaker schools of the section. But the date for the game with Lakewood Military Academy was rapidly approaching

and Doc Tupper was anything but happy over the prospects.

The preceding year, Lakewood had won two games out of the three and had also won the largest number of games of any of the secondary schools in that section and, therefore, Lakewood was considered the holder of the baseball championship. But, with Pep's ability with the bat and with a nine that was considerably stronger than the previous season, Doc had been building hopes of winning from Lakewood. He felt positive that, if he could win from Lakewood, Wingate surely would gain the championship.

Doc, not being so well acquainted with Pep, soon came to regard him with anything but real cordiality. Yet, as stated, he still urged Pep to remain on the team, although, of course, it was impossible for him to permit Pep to play in any regular game.

Thus things had run along until the Friday before the first game with Lakewood. The old spirit of affection that had been so close among the East Wingate chums was now seriously disrupted by what the boys regarded as Pep's unreasonable attitude in not explaining the

situation to them. Pink was beginning to feel some compunctions of conscience over this because, as he considered it, it wasn't quite right that the friendship of so long standing should be broken up just by a single misunderstanding. His confidence in Pep was such that he was beginning to think that Pep had a real worth-while excuse for not explaining.

So, on this particular Friday afternoon, Pink had resolved to make special effort to renew the old familiar friendly relationships. As a starter in carrying out this resolution, he went over to his chums' room and invited Pep and Tick to go down town for a little soda water spree at Carter's Candy Shop.

Just as the boys were about to enter the candy store they met one of the teachers and three of the girls from Miss Gould's school coming out. One of these girls was Clara Sweet and, of course, Pink, Tick and Pep promptly and politely doffed their caps and gave a friendly greeting to Clara.

Clara returned the greeting and smiled at Pink and Tick, but with an instant change of her face, which seems to be an accomplishment at which most girls are particularly adept, she stared coldly

past Pep, not even so much as letting her eyes meet his. Both Pink and Tick had caught this by-play and, as they entered the store, Pink whispered to Pep:

"Gee whiz! Clara certainly gave you the glassy glare, all right. What's the trouble? Is she mad because of your fuss with her brother?"

"No!" replied Pep. "I guess not. I don't know what she's mad about."

And he really did not. As a matter of fact he was the most surprised youth of the trio. To him it seemed a pretty tough proposition. For a fellow to suffer all the troubles that he had been enduring, all on account of Clara, and then to have her deliberately refuse to speak to him, seemed a little too much for one fellow to bear.

There was very little sweetness to the ice cream soda that Pep managed to swallow. All the while both Tick and Pink were alternately chaffing him and then trying to pump him for the reason why Clara had "turned him down." Both of his chums were aware of his admiration of Clara which he had kept secret from others.

As the boys departed from the store, suddenly Pink slapped his thigh and said:

"By Jimminy Crickets! I've got it!" and then stopped suddenly.

"What's that you've got?" asked Tick. "A stroke of paralysis of the willie woggles?"

"Nothing that you would ever think of," replied Pink. "I've just got hold of a thought—a *real* thought. Something that you don't know anything about, of course."

"Oh, go on," chaffed Tick, "you don't know what a real thought looks like."

Pep didn't enter into the chaffing, because he was too much cast down by Clara's recent treatment of him, and Pink, also, soon relapsed into silence. After a while, however, he broke forth.

"Say, Tick, aren't Clara and Eddie Sweet cousins of yours?"

"Sure," admitted Tick, "although I'm not particularly proud of acknowledging the relationship so far as Eddie is concerned. What about it?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Pink.

"By the way, got anything on after supper to-night?"

"No, I guess not," Tick replied.

"All right, suppose you come over and see me

a few minutes. I want to talk with you about a problem—in mathematics."

On the following day the Lakewood boys, as was their custom, arrived early, coming over in their gaily decorated motor buses, accompanied by other automobiles containing a goodly number of rooters. Before the game the Lakewood students were making themselves very much in evidence about the town, flaunting their school colors and generally enjoying themselves. They were confident of victory.

But Pep Pindar had almost reached the depths of despair. He had donned his baseball togs and, as was his custom, was intending to go down to take part in the warming-up practice before the game. But he was heart-sick over the prospects. Then, as the despondency finally gripped him, he told Tick, who had already achieved the position he formerly had held at East Wingate, as Official Score Keeper for the Academy boys, that he was not going down even to attend the game.

"What's the trouble, old boy? Are you really sick?" asked Tick anxiously.

"No, I guess it's nothing very serious, but maybe I've been eating too much or something," mumbled Pep.

After advising him to go and see Doctor Ruggles, the school physician, and have him fix up something that would make him feel better so he could attend the game, Tick and Pink finally departed for the field.

Pep sat down in the big morris chair and, if he had been a few years younger, it is pretty certain that he would have indulged in a real cry. In fact, a tear or two did trickle down his face. He was simply heartsick and felt that everything had gone wrong with him. The disappointment was so bitter. After all the struggle that he had made to gain the coveted honor and then, when about to taste the joys of victory, to have the cup snatched from him was almost more than a fellow could bear.

He thought of the former time when he had decided to quit school, but now he decided he would not even think of quitting but would just keep plugging on, but with no hope for ever having any fun in the future. It seemed to him that the bottom had dropped entirely out of the universe, so far as he was concerned.

Just then there came a knock at his door, and, as he mumbled "Come in," one of the smaller boys of the Academy entered and said:

"Pep, the 'old June Bug' wants you to come over to the office right away because there's a lady there to see you."

"A lady to see me." Pep was surprised.

"Yes, a girl."

"Gee whiz! I wonder if Sis has picked a time like this to come over to visit the school," he murmured, as he grabbed his cap and started across the grounds to Doctor Bugbee's office.

To his astonishment, when he entered the office, instead of finding his sister, the young lady who arose to greet him, smilingly, was none other than Clara Sweet.

"How do you do, Mr. Pindar," said Clara as she advanced to shake hands, the formality of the address being due, of course, to Doctor Bugbee's presence.

The doctor, also, was unusually cordial and, where Clara put on the formality, for once the doctor dropped it and said:

"Hello, Pep!"

This certainly was as surprising as it was cheering. In fact, Pep was fairly dazed at the whole performance, but he managed to greet them both in a rather awkward fashion.

"Well, my boy, I think we have some good news for you," continued the doctor. "This young lady has been over and told me all about your pleasant little call upon her at Miss Gould's school."

Pep was more mystified and he blurted out to Clara:

"Well, what'd you want to do that for? I hadn't let out a word about it."

"No, you poor simpleton," said Clara. "I suppose you wouldn't have said a word if they had actually suspended you from the Academy, would you?"

"Why, I guess I wouldn't," admitted Pep with a rather rueful smile.

Then the doctor interrupted to explain.

"Young man, you want to be mighty thankful to this young lady because the news she brings me is going to let you help our boys win from Lake-wood to-day."

"What do you mean?" asked Pep.

"Well, I suppose we better not keep you in suspense any longer." Thereupon, the doctor explained the whole situation and told how, on the previous evening, Tick, who was Clara's real

cousin, had secured official permission to call upon her, because Pink, after going out from the soda fountain, had guessed enough of the difficulty to feel certain that Clara was concerned in it. And so, when Tick told Clara how Pep had been suspended from playing ball because of having broken Rule Thirteen, Clara had told of her own indignation and humiliation because Pep had been the bearer of a note written by Jake Snyder.

She had not been able to figure out just why Pep would bring her a note from Jake and she had managed to conceal the note from the teachers so that that had not gotten her into any trouble. But one of the teachers had been on the field when Pep made his rather peculiar call and had demanded an explanation. Because Clara could not give a satisfactory explanation, she, too, had been subjected to a few black marks in deportment, but nothing so serious as the penalty Pep had been obliged to pay.

Upon learning that Pep was being prevented from playing baseball, Clara had decided to go to one of her teachers and make a clean breast of the whole affair. Then, with the advice and consent of the teacher, she had made this call upon Doctor Bugbee.

When Pep produced the letter from his sister, and explained the situation from his angle, of course everything was cleared up.

"And now, young man, you'd better hustle down to the ball field, because there isn't very much time before the game. Of course, I don't know what will happen, but I imagine, probably, that you may get a chance to play."

"I surely hope you will trim those Lakewood fellows, even if my brother does go to school there," put in Clara vigorously.

As they shook hands and departed, Pep stammeringly attempted to thank Clara. She gave him a smile that more than made up for the "icy stare" that she had handed him on the previous day and took her departure. As Pep, also, was about to depart, Doctor Bugbee called:

"By the way, Pindar, if another occasion should arise when you should wish to visit your—er—cousin at Miss Gould's school, I trust you will not forget to ask me for an official permission."

As Pep noted the quizzical smile in the doctor's eyes, he blushinglly said:

"Yes, sir! Thank you!" and departed hastily for the ball field.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST GAME OF WINGATE ACADEMY AGAINST LAKEWOOD MILITARY ACADEMY

As PEP left Doctor Bugbee's office and raced off towards the ball field, he felt like the hero in one of Brigg's cartoons—"Ain't it a Grand and Glorious Feelin'?" He actually seemed to bounce along, feeling fairly buoyant with the joy that possessed him. He was not certain that he would get a chance to play, but even that thought did not discourage him, because the sudden sweeping away of the storm that had threatened to overwhelm him brought too much sunshine to be dissipated by any small clouds.

He felt kindly towards all the world, not even excepting the originator of his previous troubles; so, when he saw Eddie Sweet among the Lakewood rooters, Pep even grinned and waved his

hand. Eddie looked amazed, and, while he nodded in return, he gave rather a forced smile.

The Lakewood ball players were occupying the diamond, and the snappy practice that they were displaying was getting Doc Tupper, the captain of the Wingate team, more and more dismayed. But when Pep came along, beaming with smiles and radiating the joy that he felt, it swept away Doc's gloom immediately. Guessing, at once, the reason for Pep's evident pleasure, Doc exclaimed:

"Great Scott! Pep, old scout, has the old June Bug lifted the ban and is he going to let you play to-day?"

"Surest thing you know," answered Pep joyously. "That is, he says I can play so far as he is concerned. But you're the captain, of course."

"Well, you bet you're going to play then, if it's all right with Doctor Bugbee."

"What happened? How did you settle it? What was the big trouble anyway?" were questions that were hurled at him from Pink and some of his other friends who knew about the difficulty.

As well as he could, with considerable stammering, on account of Clara's connection with the affair, Pep related the whole story. As he finished

talking, Tick exclaimed in disgust, referring to Eddie Sweet:

"And to think of that pup having the nerve to come here and watch the game after playing a dirty trick like that, and using his own sister to help him. Gosh, I disown him as a cousin of mine, although," winking at Pep, "I don't think I'll just disown his sister yet. She's still 'a cousin o' mine,' " with another wink which caused Pep to blush more deeply and immediately turn the conversation to the prospects and plans of the game.

Pink had won his regular place as backstop, but Pep was not the best pitcher on the team, and, consequently, the plans were to play him most of the time in the outfield, giving him an occasional opportunity in the box. Doc Tupper had an idea that this was the better plan, because he felt that the strenuous work in the pitching box might detract from Pep's ability with the stick, and that was the thing that Doc was counting upon most to help him win the championship.

"Say, Pep," said Doc, as the idea occurred to him, "how do you think it would work to start the game without you in it? Of course, most of the Lakewood fellows have heard about your being

suspended from ball playing, so they are not expecting you to play to-day. Suppose we keep it up just a little bit longer and then wait until we get a few fellows on bases. Then I'll slip you in as a pinch hitter and play you out in center field the rest of the game."

Pep would have preferred to get right into the game from the start, yet he saw the strategy of the scheme, realizing that anything that disconcerts the other nine is always considered the proper tactics in baseball, providing, of course, no unfair means is used to confuse the opposing team.

For three whole innings, Pep fussed and fumed on the bench. The pitchers for both teams were keyed to the top notch of determination, so, until the Wingate half of the fourth inning, it was purely a pitcher's battle. Not a single man had reached second, although a few had managed to gain the initial sack.

Then, in the last half of the inning, which was Wingate's turn at bat, after one had been struck out and a second one caught out on a little infield pop fly, little Tim Larkin, the Wingate shortstop, managed to draw a free pass. Pink was the next man at bat, and, as Tim was the best base runner

on the Wingate team, as Pink waited out the pitcher, Tim managed not only to steal second, but also third, due to the catcher putting over a wild throw to second base. The ball went low and wide, and was fumbled by the fielders who were backing up second, enabling Tim to reach third, although it took a long slide and was a nip-and-tuck decision.

During the opposing pitcher's efforts to catch Tim at third, Pink walked and reached second. This, of course, was the cue for Pep to come on the stage, although, for a moment, Doc doubted whether it was advisable, since there were two men out. He knew something of Pep's home-run record, but Doc was naturally skeptical about anyone being able to produce a home run just at the desired moment, although he felt pretty confident that Pep could, at least, make a safe hit. He thought possibly he might wait it out a little longer so Pep might get a better opportunity later in the game, but, as he spoke to Pep about it, Pep said:

"Let me go in, because I feel like knocking that ball clear out of sight."

"All right, go to it, and if you lose the ball I'll

pay for another out of my own pocket," Doc grinned. Then, walking out to the umpire, Doc announced the change, which the umpire immediately shouted to the grand stands.

"Pindar batting for Johnson," he megaphoned. Immediately, there was consternation among the ranks of the Lakewood players. After Pep picked up three bats, swung them around his shoulders once or twice, and then threw two of them down, retaining his favorite stick, he walked to the plate. The captain of the Lakewood boys, who was also the catcher, threw off his mask and said:

"But we understood that Pindar was suspended from ball playing on account of not being up in his studies."

Doctor Bugbee, in the meantime, had arrived on the field, and was sitting with Professor Thomas in their favorite perch in the grand stand just back of the wire backstop. "Tommy" was one of those fellows who always liked to watch what sort of balls the pitcher was delivering. Hearing the Lakewood captain's question, Doctor Bugbee immediately arose, and, in his sonorous voice, spoke:

"I wish to state for the benefit of all present

that Mr. Pindar has never been suspended for deficiency in studies, but, through a misunderstanding, in which he was not at all to be blamed, he was prohibited from ball playing up to the present. To-day, however, the matter has been settled to our entire satisfaction and with credit to Pindar, and he is entitled to play baseball."

This, of course, settled the matter, and, although Pep's face was burning with blushes, it increased the joyousness that he had already expressed. To be vindicated, thus openly, by the old June Bug himself surely was an honor that was even worth going through all the trouble he had experienced.

He gripped the bat and felt almost that what he had said to Doc was no joke, that he really could fairly melt the ball with the hit that he would give it.

Evidently the turn of affairs had been somewhat disconcerting to the pitcher, for the first three balls that he put over were wide of the plate. For a moment, Pep felt that, perhaps, the pitcher was attempting Jake Snyder's trick and trying to give him a free pass. But this was not the case, for the next ball almost cut the center of the plate. It

was exactly the kind of a ball that Pep liked best.

With a surge of joy in his soul he wielded the bat as he had never wielded it before, and, as he felt the crack of the wood against the leather, he sped towards first base, where he noticed Doc was jumping and yelling like a wild Indian.

"Keep going, Pep, keep going! I guess it's a homer all right."

Tim and Pink, of course, were racing towards home, and Pep had reached first and was on his way to second, when, all of a sudden, he heard Doc, who was coaching, yell:

"By Jingo! Pep, you've won that bet. You've put the old pill in the river."

Sure enough, Pep's mighty hit had again broken another ground record, and had gone sailing clear across and far over the head and away past the right fielder, where it had bounded down the bank and finally rolled into the Susquehanna River.

The three tallies made by Wingate in this inning were quite sufficient to win the game. Although the pitcher evidently was disconcerted and the Lakewood team very much upset, yet they buckled down to real ball playing and did not lose their

nerve. The pitcher struck the next man out and during the rest of the game the pitchers' battle continued nip-and-tuck.

The Wingate side, however, played air-tight ball, and prevented Lakewood from making a single tally. Likewise the work of the Lakewood pitcher was nearly as effective, and in the seventh inning he managed to put two strikes across when Pep was batting. Yet Pep felt that this was his day, and he did not believe it possible that anybody could strike him out. And it was, because he met the third ball and put across another home run, although this time the ball did not reach the river.

The remainder of the game was an uneventful pitchers' battle, and, as it was not necessary for the Wingate boys to go to the bat in their end of the ninth, the game closed with a score of 4-0 in favor of Wingate, and, of course, every single score had been due almost entirely to the good work of Pep Pindar.

To say that there was a happy bunch of boys at Wingate that evening would be using a very mild expression. The term "wild Indians" and "lunatics" would be more accurate. Pep, natur-

ally, was the hero of the hour, and, until he had managed to escape to his room and lock the door, he was surrounded by a group of cheering boys. Once or twice they tried to put him on their shoulders and tote him about, but he managed to tear himself away.

There was one further pleasing incident of the day that may, possibly, be worthy of record. That evening Pink, Tick and Pep happened to have another errand down town, and, again, by strange coincidence, happened to pass Clara Sweet with another group of girls. After they were passed, again Pink turned to Pep and whispered:

"Gee, that dame certainly knows how to mix them up. If she gave you the glassy glare yesterday, she certainly gave you the sunbeam smile to-night all right, all right."

But, furiously blushing, Pep said nothing.

CHAPTER X

POP MURRAY GIVES A LITTLE TALK TO THE WIN- GATE TEAM AND MAKES A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT

ONE AFTERNOON, not many days after the Lakewood game, Pep and Pink had an appointment at Doctor Bugbee's office to attend to some matters concerned with their history course. The Doctor had gotten both of the boys so deeply interested in the study of history that they were not only studying their regular text-books, but were reading other historical works, and, this evening, the Doctor had promised to help them make out a special list of books of historical stories that he believed they would find interesting.

As they were just turning into the Doctor's gate, much to their amazement, they met Pop Murray coming out. Greeting him boisterously by rush-

ing up and grabbing his hands and almost shaking his arms off, the boys exclaimed:

"For the love of Mike! Where did you come dropping from?" from Pep, and,

"What's the idea, Pop, are you signing up with Doctor Bugbee for a course in Wingate?" from Pink.

"Sure," replied Pop, grinning. "I heard you were in great need of ball players, and, as my education was a bit neglected when I was a lad, and, as I have a good deal more time to spare for such matters now, I thought I would come over and enroll with your school. I have heard it was a pretty fair sort of a school, although not quite as tony and up-to-snuff as Lakewood."

"Aw, come on, you old kidder," said Pink affectionately. "You know there isn't a school in the whole world that can beat Wingate."

"Well, maybe not, maybe not," said Pop. Then, to give a serious explanation to his errand, "I was just calling on the boss of your school about a little personal matter and now I'm in a regular pickle about something else."

"Why, what happened?" asked Pep and Pink solicitously.

"There was another fellow in there who the boss called Professor Thomas, and it seems this Thomas has a lot to do with your athletics, and when I told him my name he seemed to know more about me than I do myself, for he said right away that as long as I was over to the Academy I must stay over and give the baseball boys a little talk to-night, and there was no getting away from him.

"I told him I wasn't any talker, but he just said that he had heard all about me from you fellows and he wouldn't take no for an answer, so there you are. Now, I suppose I'll have to do it, although I'd rather have a tooth pulled than make a talk to a bunch of crazy boys I don't know. Of course, if it was just you and Pink and the East Wingate laddies, it would be all right."

"Well, you can bet all the East Wingate boys will be there," announced Pink; "and 'Tommy' surely has pulled off a good one this time. Pep and I will spread the news so we'll all be there."

"Oh, that's all right," said Pop. "Don't try to scare up too much of a crowd. Mr. Thomas said it was just going to be for the baseball players, and, of course, he wants me to talk about

baseball, because that's the only thing I know anything about, barring a little bit of knowledge of blacksmithing and looking after automobiles."

The special meeting was held in the "gym," which was crowded, not only with the players on the team, but almost every student in the Academy who had heard about it had cut every other engagement and come to hear the talk by Pop Murray.

The East Wingate boys, particularly Pep, because of his big work with the stick, and Pink, because of his chatter and general excellence in his studies and athletics, and Tick, because of his being an odd but friendly sort of character, were gaining considerable popularity at the Academy.

Professor Thomas acted as the chairman of the meeting, and, after paying a rather glowing tribute to the veteran pitcher's baseball ability, which caused Pop to squirm and blush considerably, the Professor sat down and Pop had the floor.

The yells and cheers of the boys at first caused him more confusion; but, as Pep and Pink and Tick and Andy and several other East Wingate boys were grouped together near the front row, Pop looked at them, recovered confidence and

commenced his talk in about the same manner that he used to talk to the boys back home in his garage.

"Well, my laddies, you've heard the story of the fellow who had to make a speech at his own wedding dinner and who was rather confused, and when he stood up his knees kind of trembled, so he put his hands on the shoulders of his blushing bride and said—referring to the fact, of course, that he didn't want to make a speech—"This thing has been thrust upon me."

As the laughter at this sally subsided, he continued:

"But your professor here thinks I can make a speech, even if I don't think so myself, and so, as I've always had a lot of confidence in men with book-learnin', I'm going to do the best I can.

"He wants me to talk about baseball because, I presume, he knows that's about all I have much knowledge of anyway, because when I was a young laddie, like yourselves, I was such a fool as not to go to school, so about the only learnin' I've picked up at all was in what folks call 'the University of Hard Knocks' and on the ball field.

"Now, after hearing about the record that you

fellows made the other day against Lakewood, I sort of figured that maybe there wasn't much about baseball playing that I could tell you.

"Then, as I took a second thought about the matter, there was a few thoughts that popped into my head that I am going to give to you for what they are worth, although they may not be worth much.

"I heard that you won the Lakewood game chiefly through the good playing, or the good luck, maybe," with a grin towards Pep, "of one of your players. Whether it was his good playing or good luck, there's just one thing I want to tell you, and that is that while you might win a game now and then through the work of one man, it don't happen that way many times. It is the work of the whole team that counts most, not what just one or two of the star players are doing. So the first pointer I'd give you is to get all the teamwork that you can.

"My friend Pep, here, is somewhat of a wizard with the stick. Batting seems to come naturally to him and he takes a great interest in it. But you can see for yourselves that in the long run of games you are not going to win the cham-

pionship simply because of one man's batting, but because all of your team learn the art of making hits. So I'm going to try to give you just a few little pointers about batting.

"First of all, the main thing in my mind that a batter needs is confidence. You can't hit the ball if you are anyways afraid or if you've got the least bit of doubt that you're going to hit it. Every time you step up to bat, you've got to feel that you're a better man than the pitcher and that the pitcher can't possibly strike you out. I don't mean by this that you want to be conceited, but you've got to be confident.

"Now, about the kind of bat to use. Of course, ideas and opinions sort o' differ on this matter. Some fellows seem to figure that it takes a big heavy bat to make a big hit. But my idea is that a fellow needs to have a bat that he can handle just as though it was a part of himself. For instance, if he's a small sort of a lad, he can't possibly swing a big heavy stick, but, of course, if he's a big, husky fellow, naturally he can handle a heavier stick than a smaller fellow could.

"So in picking out a bat mind the point, get one that suits your own ability. The length of it

don't make so much difference, nor the weight of it. If you can swing it easy and if you can get the feeling that the bat is really just a part of yourself, that's the big idea.

"The next point about batting is to have a good eye. You've got to be able to keep your eye on the ball all the time. I don't care how much muscle a fellow has, unless he's got a keen eye and gets the knack of knowing just how the ball is going to come, and just what break it is going to make, he'll never make a top-notch batter.

"And another point about batting, too, that I want to tell you is that it isn't always the heavy hitter that counts the most, although, of course, the heavy hitters are always in demand. But some of the men that held the batting records in the big leagues are not such tremendous hitters. Take old Ty Cobb. Well, he hits them out pretty strong once in a while, yet it is the fact that he usually hits them safe and that he is such a swift and sure runner that makes him one of the star players in the major leagues.

"You might say the same thing for Tris Speaker, although he quite often manages to make a home run. But, like Ty Cobb, Speaker is fa-

mous for the fact that he hits them 'where they ain't.' That is, where they are not easy to be fielded, and this is the thing that counts a lot in getting men on the bases and pulling in the scores.

"When you are thinking of being a good batter, remember that about half of the art of making a record as a hitter is to be able to run bases. A feller that is slow in starting after he has hit the ball, or that's lopy in running the bases, isn't very apt to be counted a star hitter. It is the bunched hits that win the games. If you haven't any good hitter or quite a lot of good hitters on your team, no matter how good you play in the field when the other fellers are batting, the chances are against you. So, by all means, I urge every one of you to study the art of batting as much as you possibly can.

"There's another point about winning ball games that always has been sort o' what you might call a hobby with me. I've often said to the boys over at East Wingate that it isn't the hitting ability, nor the playing ability of the single players, that counts, but it's the whole nine playing together, just like a machine, that turns out the winning nine. The thing that is behind this

team work is what some folks call inside baseball.

"It's the planning of the games. It's the arranging of all sorts of signals so that every fellow on the team knows just what is going to be pulled off and just how it is going to be done, so that every fellow is prepared to do his part in making the machine work just as it ought to work.

"Now, if I should talk to you about this machine work, this team work, this inside playing, I might be talking here all the night, because it is one of the biggest subjects about baseball. But there's a few little pointers I can give you as sort of examples, and if you get together with Professor Thomas and your other coaches, you can surely figure out a lot of good things in the way of inside work.

"Of course, the man to give the signals usually is the captain, and, if possible, it's well for him to be the catcher. But every fellow on the team ought to know all the signals and ought to be able to give them, because sometimes the captain or the manager flashes the signals from the bench to one of the players and he passes them on to the rest of the players in the game.

"You have all heard that McGraw of the Giants

is sometimes called the Napoleon of the ball field. That's due almost entirely to the fact that he's a regular wizard when it comes to the inside stuff, or what you call strategy. Many a game the Giants have won before the game was really played by the strategy that McGraw and Johnny Evers, his right-hand man, have worked out before the two nines came on the diamond.

"They have figured out the tricks that were to be played and arranged their signals, and then when they came to the game they pulled them off just as they had arranged. In a good many boys' baseball nines, about all the signals they arrange is between the pitcher and the catcher. But that's a big mistake. Don't forget that every man on the team should know the signals given by the captain, whether he's telling the batter to hit it out hard or to make a bunt, or to wait it out or to strike at the good ones. There should be signals for the fielders so that they know whether to play away back or to move in closer. And then, of course, there should be lots of signals for the base runners.

"What the man on the coaching line is saying out loud shouldn't be the real meaning of what

he is saying to the men who are running. There should be a secret meaning to his words and his actions that tells the base runner just what he is expected to do, and not only tells the base runner what to do, but also tells the batter and all the other players; so that if there are two men on the bases at one time they both know from what the man on the coaching line is saying and doing exactly what's expected of them. Then they won't get their wires crossed and make a bungle of things.

"But now I've talked to you a good bit longer than I expected to. Perhaps what I've said is not worth much to you, but I've done my best and if you'll only remember the two things I point out—that it's teaching the batters the ability to hit and good team work that win games—I feel pretty certain that the Wingate Academy will get the championship for the coming season." Pop sat down amid the rousing cheers of all the boys.

The meeting was not dismissed immediately, but there was a whispered conversation between Pop and Professor Thomas, Pop shaking his head and whispering, "You do it!" Finally the Professor rose and said:

"Boys, there is a little further announcement that I think the baseball team will find of particular interest. I've tried to induce Mr. Murray to tell you about it, but he claims he has made as much of a speech for one evening as he can stand, so I will have to do the talking.

"It seems that one of our players, whose name I won't mention—possibly most of you can guess who it is—has aroused the interest of a man high up in circles of baseball in one of the teams of the major leagues. This prominent baseball man, not long ago, sent a letter to Mr. Murray inquiring about this player. Mr. Murray replied promptly, and a few days ago he received a very interesting announcement from this gentleman, who is the manager of the World's Champion Blue Sox.

"He has sent an invitation, asking every member of our first baseball team, including the official scorekeeper, to attend a game, two weeks from Saturday, at the Polo Grounds in New York City, where the Pilgrims are going to play the Blue Sox.

"Now it happens, very fortunately, that this Saturday is a day in which we had scheduled no

regular baseball game, since this is the occasion of our Annual May Day Festival. I presume, however, the boys of the baseball team can get excused from this event, providing they desire to go and the consent of Doctor Bugbee has been obtained.

"Mr. Murray has generously agreed to bear all of the expenses of the trip, and when Doctor Bugbee and I argued against this, he convinced us that it would be a privilege, since he says he has no sons or kin of his own and therefore considers it a privilege to occasionally spend money to give other boys a little fun.

"The plan is for us to drive to New York in automobiles. Mr. Murray will drive one of the cars and I the other. We will have to start before daybreak, Saturday morning, in order to arrive in New York in time for the game. We will arrange to stay in the city all night and return on the following day. Of course, it will be necessary for each of you to secure your parents' consent to this trip before it can be taken, but I presume none of you will experience any difficulty on that point."

CHAPTER XI

THE SECOND GAME WITH LAKEWOOD

FOR DAYS following Pop Murray's visit and his announcement of a trip to New York City with free passes to the game between the Pilgrims and the Blue Sox it naturally was the chief topic of conversation at Wingate. The rest of the students were envious of the ball players on the first team, and, of course, when they explained that Professor Thomas and Mr. Murray were going along to take care of them during the trip, none of the players' parents objected. The ball player regarding whom the manager of the Blue Sox had written to Pop Murray was generally presumed to be Pep, although, of course, the boys were mystified, and considerably flattered, to find the manager of the world's champions taking interest in so small a school as Wingate Academy.

The world began to look pretty rosy to Pep.

Not only was he winning more than his usual honors on the diamond, but naturally he was filled with considerable pride to even think of the possibility of himself being singled out for the attention of one of the great men in the ranks of balldom.

Furthermore, he was progressing better than ever in his studies and was beginning really to like most of his school work, excepting Latin. Even in Latin, however, his markings were better than usual. He was beginning to be able to study and do his work almost independently of his two coaches. But Tick and Pink were not going to take any chances, so they kept up the coaching schedule which Tick had laid out. As a matter of fact, the two young coaches found that their system was not only beneficial to Pep, but also was a great assistance to themselves in their school work. While they were trying to teach Pep, they were making the lessons more clear to themselves and deepening the impression of the main points of the matters they were studying.

These things looked pretty good, so it is not surprising that, receiving so much praise and flattery from his schoolmates, being regarded as the

popular athletic idol of the school, standing in well with his teachers, and last, but by no means least, feeling that there was a pleasant understanding between himself and Clara Sweet, Pep, for the first time in his life, began to experience a slight attack of swelled head.

This is a disease which very few boys of real talent escape. Sometimes it works out to their injury, but most of them are cured, although a few never recover.

As is customary in school ball-playing, the season at Wingate was rather short, consequently the boys were playing an average of two games a week, usually a game both on Friday and Saturday. In every game Pep was keeping up his splendid batting record. He acquired at least one home run in each game.

So on the Friday before the date scheduled for their trip to New York, as the boys were motor-ing over to Lakewood, there was in general a much different feeling than they had held before the first game. In fact, there was not a player but fully expected that they were bound to win all three games from Lakewood. No one could see any possibility of their being defeated. They

all seemed to have entirely lost sight of the fact that Lakewood had put up a very strong fight against them in the first game and that it was only due to Pep's phenomenal work with the stick that they had managed to capture the game.

At Lakewood, the games were held on an enclosed athletic field termed the Clark Stadium, named in honor of the donor of the fund for erecting it. As Pep looked about he began to speculate on whether it would be possible for him to hit a ball to go clear over the high fence of the stadium. There were both grand stands and bleachers, gaily decorated with bunting of the Lakewood colors. All the seats were filled and people were occupying every available place on the grounds, all rooters for the school. Lakewood being a very small place, the military academy was the chief business of the community.

Following out the good advice that Pop Murray had given in his little talk, Doc Tupper, assisted by Professor Thomas and the other boys, had arranged quite an elaborate system of signaling and had planned a number of special maneuvers, or trick plays, which they expected to work during the game.

After the usual warming-up practice the umpire called the time and the first inning started with the Lakewood boys at bat. Perhaps it was one of those lucky flukes which are so common in baseball, or perhaps the Lakewood team had headed their batting order with one of their best players, but anyway the very first man at bat connected with the very first ball pitched and lined out a three-bagger. This was disconcerting to the Wingate boys naturally, yet it did not cause them to lose their grit. But one other player made a safe hit and the runner on third scored before they could get three men out. The Wingate boys, however, in their half, were unable to score.

In the second inning, although the Lakewood boys seemed to be reaching the ball quite frequently, owing to the good backing of both the Wingate infield and outfield, no runs were tallied.

Pink was the first man up in the Wingate half of the inning and he managed to make a single. The second batter waited until finally Pink stole second. Then, at the signal from Doc, who was on the first base coaching line, the batter laid down a bunt which worked to perfection and ad-

vanced Pink to third and enabled the runner to reach first safely.

At this point, Doc planned to work one of the trick plays very common in baseball known as the double steal. Therefore, he signalled to Pep to let the first ball go by. Pep received the signal, but as he had taken note of the Lakewood pitcher's style of delivery, it flashed into his mind that the next ball was going to be of Pep's favorite variety. So, thinking it would be a much better play for him to knock one of his big home runs instead of taking the chance of the double-steal trick working out, Pep put all his force behind the swing and connected with the ball for a long fly to right.

Unfortunately, however, the fly was not a home run. The Lakewood player just managed to get under it and caught it safely. Meantime, both the runner on first and Pink on third were speeding towards home, both of them thinking that they had not understood the signals, and believing the plan was for Pep to attempt one of his famous home runs. Both had gone too far to return safely after the fly was caught, and the fielder promptly shot it to first and the first base-

man relayed it to third, thus making a triple play and retiring the side.

If the boy who had batted the three-bagger in the first inning had caused surprise, the result of Pep's failure to make a home run and the disaster following it caused consternation among the Wingate boys. As Doc came down from the coaching lines, he inquired of Pep:

"Didn't you catch my signal to let the first one pass?"

"Yes," admitted Pep, "but it was such a good one I thought I could line it out and bring us all three in."

"You did, eh?" said Doc angrily. "Well, just for that we'll try and finish up this game without your assistance. You can sit on the bench and Johnson can take your place in the field."

Pep was about to protest, but then, upon second thought, turned away without a word.

It was not a ball game at which Pep was an anguished spectator from the bench. It was a tragedy. Some of the boys attempted to argue with Doc, but possibly he had been getting a little jealous of so much praise being given to Pep Pindar. At any rate, he stuck to his decision, and

the affair seemed to take the heart right out of his players.

Nevertheless, they played on doggedly and managed to hold the Lakewood score down to seven, although they were able to obtain only a single tally.

It was a silent group of ball players who travelled back to Wingate that night. Pep felt that he had acted upon the right impulse, that it was simply a mistake that had not worked out as he had planned and that Doc had been too severe. The other players were somewhat divided in their opinion. Some of them thought that Doc was right in his method of disciplining Pep for failing to pay attention and carry out the plays as signalled, while others thought Doc was wrong in not overlooking the matter. Pink thought Pep deserved a little calling down, but that Doc should have still kept him in the game.

As if in sympathy with the discouraged players, a drizzling shower started shortly after their automobiles left Lakewood and continued all the way to Wingate.

Meantime, the telephones had announced the sad verdict to the boys at school and there was

anything but a rousing reception given to the players. Being confident of victory, some of the boys had planned to have a bonfire and a big celebration.

Professor Thomas had not been able to accompany the boys to Lakewood, but he came down to greet them on their return, and was about the only cheerful person present. He said:

"What's the matter with you fellows? Haven't you ever been trimmed in a ball game before? You act as though you had lost your last chance. Just remember there is one more game with Lakewood coming, so you have still got a first-rate chance of winning the series. But I'm afraid you won't be winners if you allow a single defeat to discourage you as much as you appear to be right now. Anyway, cheer up, boys! Remember, every fellow must be on hand promptly at three next Tuesday morning. Set your alarm clocks, as Mr. Murray is coming over to stay at Wingate Monday and we will meet at the front gateway and want to start at three o'clock sharp. It may not be quite daylight then, but, for the first time in your lives, some of you fellows may have a chance to see the sun rise."

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The anticipation of the trip to New York of course allayed some of the pangs of their defeat, but they were anything but a cheerful lot of players as they went to their beds that night.

CHAPTER XII

THE BOYS TAKE A TRIP TO THE POLO GROUNDS AND SEE THE BLUE SOX PLAY THE PILGRIMS

WHILE the trip down to New York might not be called exactly a joyous affair, due to the events of the previous Friday, yet it is pretty hard for healthy, athletic boys to nurse a sorrow or disappointment. It was particularly difficult for a fellow to feel anything but happy on a trip over such splendid roads and through such beautiful scenery as the route through middle New York, over the Catskills and down through New Jersey. Besides, both Pop and Professor Thomas, who drove the two big cars, were especially gay; so it was not long before the boys were laughing and chaffing as usual and, of course, singing a good bit.

The start from the Academy gate was not strictly on schedule, as Professor Thomas had proclaimed it should be. Afterwards, he con-

fessed to the fellows that he had had too long an experience in dwelling with boys to expect all twelve fellows to be on time. However, the delay was less than half an hour for rounding up the stragglers and there were no absentees.

The regular team consisted of eleven players, which, with Tick, the official scorekeeper, made up the even dozen. Doc acted as both captain and manager, therefore there were no other extra players.

The drive was uneventful, without a single accident, even so much as a puncture or a blowout. Pop set the pace and kept his car spinning along at a steady thirty-mile clip and Professor Thomas, of course, had no difficulty in keeping close behind him. Of course, stops were made at Middletown and some of the other villages along the route, for light refreshments. But packages of sandwiches were carried along so that it was unnecessary to make a stop for dinner and the cars arrived at the Dyckman Street ferry a trifle after noon.

Professor Thomas, who was a Columbia graduate and who was, therefore, quite familiar with New York City, had made arrangements in

advance with one of the big apartment hotels on University Heights to take care of the boys. Landing at the ferry they drove down Broadway to a famous restaurant near Grant's Tomb, where, despite all of the sandwiches they had stowed away during the trip, every boy made a clean-up of the luncheon that was provided.

After luncheon they again entered the autos and were driven back up Broadway and thence across to the speedway where their cars were parked and for the first time they had a view of the Polo Grounds.

Although it was nearly an hour before the time for calling the game, great crowds were pouring into the grounds from various directions, as both the Blue Sox and Pilgrims were strongly in the race for the pennant, the Sox having won the world's championship for the two previous seasons, naturally the game was bound to draw a record-breaking crowd.

But the boys were not obliged to stand in line, since they already had received passes. They were delighted to find that the box provided for them was in the very front, in the lower tier of the grand stand just a short ways from first base.

The two opposing teams had not yet arrived on the grounds, although there were a dozen or more players in the uniform of the Pilgrims, some pitching and catching and one or two groups practicing at bunting.

The diamond was being put into shape by the attendants, and this, of course, was an interesting sight to the boys, who never had realized how much care is required to keep the big league baseball diamonds in top-notch condition. Some of the boys were surprised to find so much turf on the diamond. They had supposed that the entire inner diamond was peeled like their own ball fields. Over the bare ground first was driven a sprinkling cart and then two different kinds of drags and then a group of men with rakes, shovels, brooms and scrapers proceeded to smooth down the uneven spots, while a big iron roller was run across it to make it as smooth and hard as possible.

It seemed almost a pity to let the players, with their spiked shoes, race around and tear up the smoothness again. But, as soon as the attendants left the field, a number of the players took possession of the field and began throwing balls

around the bases, a dozen or more balls being in action all at once.

Meantime, the grand stands were filling and none of the Wingate boys had ever seen such a tremendous crowd in their lives. Presently there was a large murmur from the crowd, which soon swelled into a roar of applause as the regular Pilgrim players came from the club-house gate at the rear end of the field. As they marched across the field the crowd continued its cheering and hundreds of more or less humorous remarks were yelled by various spectators at the players.

For the most part, the players seemed to pay no attention, although all were smiling and a few waved their hands at an occasionally witty quip from some fan.

Presently there was another roar, and, to the surprise of the boys, just as loud and seemingly fully as enthusiastic, if not more so, than had greeted the Pilgrims. The Sox were now coming through the club-house gate and starting across the field.

Up to that time the boys had not fully realized the fact that, at the Polo Grounds in New York, there is less of a partisan baseball crowd than can

possibly be found on almost any other field, due to the fact, probably, that New York always has visitors from every part of the country. Likewise, many of the citizens of New York formerly came from other sections and always retain a sort of home-town affection for their local team. It seemed to the boys that hundreds of the spectators acted as familiar towards some of the players as though they had been old college chums, even more familiar in some cases.

It appeared to our boys that nearly everyone in the grand stands recognized and considered themselves as personal friends of Meaker, who was, at that time, possibly the best-known player on the Sox. From every side came friendly greeting.

"Hello, Chris, old top, how's the old bean working to-day?"

Wagner, the shortstop, was almost equally well known and his face was wreathed in smiles as from all sides came the greeting:

"Hello, Chick!"

Joe Good, due to the wonderful pitching that had beaten the Giants in the world championship series, and because of his continued good

work in the box since, was another most popular idol of the fans and he received the friendly "Hello, Joe" greeting.

In fact, there was scarcely a player on the team who did not receive familiar and jocular recognition from the fans. Of course, there was considerable good-natured chaffing and caustic remarks as to what the Pilgrims were going to do with them, from the partisans of the Pilgrims. Yet the boys noticed that whenever a partisan remark was made in the grand stands there seemed to be always another fan nearby to take up the argument and all about them they could hear snatches of more or less earnest but good-natured discussion as to the respective merits, not only of the Pilgrims and Sox, but also of the favorite teams in the league.

There was one particularly vociferous man, evidently from the middle West, who had no objection to letting the folks know that Detroit was his favorite team and that he was pretty certain that nothing could stop the Tigers from capturing the pennant.

"I'll tell the world," said this man loudly, "that Ty Cobb alone is a baseball team all by

himself. So, believe me, boys, this is Detroit's year."

Plenty of others were quick to take up the argument and show him, in their judgment, what a slim chance Detroit had in the race. And so, on every side, there was amusement and entertainment for the boys, although, of course, their main attention was centered on the players capering about and beginning to warm up with practicing on the greensward. Among the Sox players, there was not one who escaped the familiar, friendly or caustic greetings of the fans. Even the manager received calls of:

"Hello, Jim, you old bean-eater. Suppose you have come down to get trimmed again," the fan evidently ignoring the fact that the Sox were not getting trimmed any too often, as they were holding their place well at the top of the first division.

The manager, however, made no reply, but grinned genially at the remarks. Presently he detached himself from his players and walked down the field towards the grand stand. More remarks than ever were hurled at him all along the line, and, as he neared the box occupied by our friends, it was evident that he was looking

for them, since he, of course, had the number of their box, as it was through him that the free passes to see the game had been received.

Naturally, the boys were in a flutter of excitement at the prospects of meeting a man so prominent in the baseball world.

But as Manager McGilraw approached nearer the stand, for the first time, Pep recalled something familiar about his face, although not on the instant, due, probably, to the fact that the baseball uniform is somewhat of a disguise and makes it very difficult for one to recognize a person who has only been seen heretofore in ordinary dress. Pop, however, gave a knowing grin towards Pep, and suddenly it flashed through Pep's mind where he had previously met the approaching manager.

"Great Scott!" he said, "is that——"

"Surest thing you know," interrupted Pop, as he guessed what Pep was going to say. And when the manager came up he immediately recognized Pop and greeted him by name, shaking hands most cordially. Next, turning to Pep, he greeted:

"How's the church-window-busting-home-run hitter to-day?"

Pep, of course, blushed and murmured that he

was fine and shook hands; thereupon, Pop introduced the rest of the boys, all of whom counted the handshake with the manager as one of the proudest moments of their lives. Professor Thomas also was introduced.

"Boys," said the manager cordially, "I want you to make yourselves right at home and enjoy yourselves in every way, and after the game come over to the club house and meet some of my boys.

"And now I must hurry back and get on the job, as we expect to trim these Pilgrims again to-day," and he departed smilingly.

Presently a bell was rung, whereupon the teams stopped their practice playing and retired from the diamond while the attendants again ran the drag over the base lines, and, with a big brush and a pail of whitewash, touched up the foul lines. While this was going on, with a big megaphone, an announcer walked around in front of the stands, calling out, at various intervals, the batteries for the day.

"For New York, Colwell and Casey. For Boston, Good and Grady. Umpires, Dineen and O'Loughlin."

A few moments later another bell was sounded and the Pilgrims took the field and the game was on. At this date, the Chicago team was heading the first division of League pennant contenders. Detroit came next with only a few games behind, while the Sox were in third place, with the Pilgrims close behind them. In fact, there was only a single game difference between the Sox and Pilgrims on June first, the Sox having won eighteen and lost fifteen, and the Pilgrims having won nineteen and lost sixteen. Accordingly, if the Pilgrims won this game there would be a change in the standing and they would go in third place, while the Sox would have to go down to fourth. As may be expected, with these conditions, the game was a fiercely fought battle. In fact, it was one of the big games of the season and ran nip-and-tuck, it requiring thirteen innings before the Sox finally put across the winning tally, making the score 4-3 in their favor.

It was a game full of close decisions, during which the grand stand roared its disapproval of the umpires, threatening dire disaster for those worthies. Several times the boys thought that some of the disputes among the spectators in the

grand stands would end in a fistic encounter, but, to the disappointment of some of them, no real fighting occurred, although one fellow was so wrought up that he very loudly proclaimed his willingness to do battle until one of the special policemen came along and squelched him with an order to "Sit down and shut up!"

The thrilling moments were too numerous to be recounted. Our boys, being the guests of the manager, were all rooting vigorously for the Sox, which brought them a few caustic remarks from some of the spectators who evidently took them for a group of New England school boys. One fellow, much to the embarrassment of little Tick Wood, singled him out as a Johnny Boston Beans and began hurling various and sundry personal remarks at little Tick, who, although among the boys was usually able to hold his own in any verbal encounter, now felt somewhat at a disadvantage.

The speed with which both teams raced to their club houses after the first winning tally was put across was a surprise to the boys, but not so much as they were surprised to see how quickly the whole field was overflowing with spectators, as

they poured out from the stands and went out towards the Sixth Avenue exits.

There were little groups of excited friends holding post-mortems over various plays and setting forth their reason why the umpires should be promptly executed for what they regarded as their criminal blunders. Other little groups stopped here and there on the diamond and seemed to examine the sacks, making gestures showing where they had thought the base runner, in sliding to a bag, had been put out instead of being safe as the umpire had announced, or perhaps the contrary.

The boys made their way into the crowd across the field to the club house, where Pop handed the doorkeeper a little card that Manager McGilraw had given him and was promptly admitted. As the manager was removing his uniform and donning his street clothes, he chatted freely with the boys and called over various players and introduced them.

Of course, every fellow wanted to shake hands with Chris Meaker and several of the other star players, all of whom, like the manager, were engaged in changing their costumes.

Pop Murray attempted to make a little formal

speech of thanks for the manager's kindness in sending him the passes, but Mr. McGilraw promptly interrupted him and said:

"That's all right. I'm always glad of a chance to give a little encouragement to youngsters, because it's no telling when we may be needing some of them. Getting a pennant these days is no easy job, and we have to keep our eyes open all the while. In fact, some of the baseball writers have claimed that we are even beginning to examine all the babies that are born in this country in order to size up whether there is any chance of their growing up to become baseball players."

The boys laughed at this and Pop continued:

"We know you are a mighty busy man, Mr. McGilraw, and we don't want to bother you, but maybe you could give the boys just one bit of advice as to what you think is the most important quality for a baseball team to possess in order to become a pennant winner."

The manager did not hesitate a minute, but promptly said:

"Obedience." And then, as the boys seemed to appear surprised at his reply, he continued: "Yes, sir! Boys, obedience is just as important

in a baseball team as it is in a military organization. You see, winning baseball games in these modern days is not altogether a matter of having an aggregation of star players. For instance, right now, the sporting writers tell us that the Browns have the best pitching staff, and, according to these baseball writers, more star players than any other team in the American League, yet, as you know, the St. Louis team has not been able to get out of the second division this season and most of the time they have been pretty far down in the cellar.

"Of course, I am not admitting that there are any more stars in any other team in the League than there are among my own boys, but the big thing that we are working at and trying to develop, and the thing that we believe is going to bring us the pennant, is the fact that our boys have got the spirit to win and they are working together like a machine, and they obey orders just as strictly and promptly as good soldiers do."

After a little further chat the boys again shook hands all around, during which each one tried to thank him individually and mumbled a few words as to how hard they were pulling to have the Sox

win the pennant and how well they liked the Sox, and then they took to their cars and proceeded to their hotel.

As they were seated at the dinner table that evening it was observed that Pep Pindar was in a brown study. He had been reviewing the events of the day and one thing that had impressed him deeply was the bit of advice given by Mr. McGilraw. He could not help thinking of this advice in connection with his own playing at Lakewood a few days previously. The more he thought of it the more he began to see wherein he had been at fault in the matter. Finally, he decided that he would call Doc Tupper aside and apologize. Then, remembering that he had made his misplay before everyone and that the boys all knew that he had thought he was in the right, he instantly decided that the only thing was a public apology, so, therefore, he burst out:

"Doc, I want to say something to you and the rest of the fellows." And, as the boys noticed his seriousness, their chatter promptly stopped and every eye was upon him. "I want to say that I am awfully sorry for what I did the other day at Lakewood in not obeying the signal you gave me.

I thought I was right, but now, after what Manager McGilraw said, I can see I was dead wrong, and I hope you will forgive me and I promise that I'll never make another bad break like that."

Instantly, Doc, who was sitting across the table, put out his hand, which Pep grasped as Doc said:

"That's all right, old boy, just you forget it. I guess I was just as much to blame as you was, losing my goat and putting you out of the game when I knew that we needed you to win."

As may be imagined, Pep's manly, open apology, and Doc's prompt reply, cleared away every cloud that had hovered over the team and knit the boys together more firmly than almost anything else possibly could have done.

It was a hilarious bunch of boys who attended the show at the Hippodrome that evening, and no one laughed more loudly at the jokes of Slivers and the other clowns, or cheered more lustily at the brilliant exploits of the mermaids, or applauded more vigorously at the marvelous performance of Power's elephants, than did the boys from Wingate.

The trip home the following day, like the trip down, was made without mishap, but the good

spirits that now reigned among the boys caused them to enjoy everything about the trip even more than they had in coming down. As Pink remarked to Doc that night as they separated to go to their rooms:

"Well, old top, I guess our little trip to New York wasn't a success maybe. I guess it wasn't what we needed to put us in trim for walloping the daylights out of Lakewood, eh, boy?"

And Doc, with a cheerful grin, replied:

"You said it, old kid. I'm already beginning to feel sorry for those Lakewood fellows. What we are going to do to them next Saturday will be a plenty."

CHAPTER XIII

PEP PLAYS AN IMPORTANT PART IN A KID- NAPPING PARTY

THE day of the final game with Lakewood had been scheduled for the day before the Lakewood Military Academy closed for the season. Therefore, at the request of the boys, it had been arranged to play the game in the morning, as this would permit some of the Lakewood players to leave for their homes that afternoon, since Lakewood drew its students from all sections of the country, and their final term closed a little ahead of the closing date of Wingate Academy.

Probably few baseball teams have faced a final decisive game with an opposing team in greater feeling of certainty of victory than did the Wingate boys as the morning dawned on the day of the big game. Likewise, it is equally probable

that few baseball teams have ever been dismayed by anything as greatly as the Wingate boys were dismayed a few hours before the game when it was discovered that Pep Pindar was missing from his room and from the Academy, and that no one knew anything of his whereabouts. The only information that could be discovered was that Tick said that a man in motoring costume had called that morning before either he or Pep were out of bed and that Pep had told him that he was going out on a little errand and would be back soon. Therefore Tick rolled over for a little further snooze, and did not get any more particulars regarding the nature of Pep's errand.

No one could possibly account for Pep's disappearance. Messages were telephoned to his home and every other possible place that could be imagined that he had gone, but not a single clue could be found.

Naturally, all of Pep's friends were distracted, and, as this included Doc, Pink and every other member of the ball team, it was a pretty dubious outfit that got ready to face the Lakewood players.

An even larger crowd of rooters than on the previous occasion had accompanied the Lakewood

team to Wingate, since the victory at Lakewood had renewed the confidence of the boys of the Military Academy and they felt pretty sure of winning the final game and thus again capture the championship. Both Wingate and Lakewood had been undefeated by any of the other schools of the vicinity, therefore this game would decide, not only the winner of the two schools, but also would give the winner the championship for the section.

There was very little snap in the practice work exhibited by the Wingate boys, previous to the calling of the game. They were a disconsolate lot, and, to all practical purposes, the game, to them, was already lost. Not that they regarded Pep as the whole team, yet his mysterious disappearance had cast such a feeling of gloom over the other players that it was impossible for them to stimulate the zest required to win against the formidable Lakewood outfit.

Of course, the search for clues as to the missing member was kept up vigorously up to the very opening of the game. There was some talk of suggesting a postponement, yet, as the Lakewood school would be closed the following day, and, therefore, it would be impossible to arrange a

later game to decide the championship, consequently this proposal was not made.

The Wingate boys decided to go on and fight it out even if their cause seemed to be hopeless. The hour set for the game was ten o'clock, and only five minutes were lacking to this time when there seemed to be some sort of a disturbance among the players on the Lakewood bench. Presently the captain of the Lakewood team came forward with an anxious look upon his face and beckoned to Doc Tupper. Said the Lakewood captain:

"Our fellows just heard a few moments ago that Pindar, your star batter, is missing."

"Yes, that's so," Doc admitted dubiously, "but, of course, we are going to do the best we can without him."

"Well, we've just found out where he is!" was the Lakewood captain's startling announcement. Continuing, he said:

"I'm very sorry to confess that a fellow attending Lakewood, who happens to be a personal enemy of Pindar, thought it would be a clever scheme and bring credit to our school and, also, gain revenge for himself, by luring Pindar away

by a cock-and-bull story and then keeping him away until after the game. But I hope you know that Lakewood doesn't stand for any dirty work of that sort, and, when this fellow said something accidentally that aroused our suspicions, we made him confess the whole plot. We find that Pindar is detained in a certain house only a few miles from town, and we, of course, will be glad to have the game delayed until you can send an automobile to release Pindar and bring him back."

Pink, who was standing by and overheard this statement, immediately exclaimed:

"We know who the skunk is who played the trick, all right, and I am ashamed to own him as a citizen of our home town. But I never thought he would have the nerve to pull off such a deal."

"I understand," said the Lakewood captain, "that he didn't work up the plan alone, but was assisted by a young man, a friend of his, who lives here in Wingate, and, thus far, he refuses to disclose the name of this confederate."

Thinking rapidly, Pink said, "I know who it is. It's Jake Snyder, who works as night clerk at the Fairfax Inn. He and Sweetie have always been as thick as thieves, and I'll bet Jake had more to

do with this dirty work than Sweetie. Jake has been trying to shine around Sweetie's sister, and she won't have anything to do with Jake, but is a pretty good friend of Pep's. Besides, Jake and Pep once had a big run-in during a game in our home town."

"But," said Doc, "let's not waste any time talking. Let's find out where he is and get a car out there and have him brought back without any more delay."

Accordingly, Pink and several other boys immediately went in search of a car, and soon were speeding on their way to the house in which, according to Eddie's confession, Pep was being detained.

The place was an abandoned farmhouse a few miles up Snake Hill road, which was a side road very little used, because it ran over a very steep hill, connecting with another main road on the other side. As the boys approached the house they noted another automobile standing in front of the house, but, upon seeing the boys' car arriving, two men, who were evidently on the watch, hastily jumped into the auto and speeded away over the hill.

The boys did not give chase, for their first object, of course, was to release Pep.

The door of the house was not locked, and, immediately upon entering, they heard a noise of pounding in one of the rooms upstairs. Making their way to this room, which they found locked, they easily burst in the door and there found Pep securely tied, hand and foot, and with a gag over his mouth to prevent his crying out. He was promptly released, and, of course, the boys asked him further particulars as to how he happened to be there.

"We can explain things going back," said Doc. "Let's hop into the car and get back and get the game started."

"Oh, haven't you started the game yet?" asked Pep. "Of course not," he continued, as he took a second thought, "you couldn't very well play with all you fellows out of it."

And as the boys proceeded to the car, Pep told his story.

"Early this morning," said he, "a fellow came to our room and knocked on the door. He told me that the day before Pop Murray had been out driving a man around the country who was buy-

ing stock, and that they had gone up the Snake Hill Road and had some sort of an accident in which Pop was hurt, not seriously, the fellow explained, but so he had to stay in a farmhouse there for a while. They got a doctor for him, and Pop had telephoned a message over to the Wingate garage and wanted me to come right over with this man who said he was one of the men working at the garage.

“Pop said he had something important that he wanted to see me about before the Lakewood game. Of course, I couldn’t figure what it was, but, as Pop has always been talking a lot about strategy in ball games, I thought maybe he had some scheme to tell us about, which he was pretty certain would help us in winning the game. As this fellow said it would take less than an hour to run out and see Pop and get back, I jumped into my clothes and told Tick I was going on an errand, and went down and got into the car with this fellow and we started off. Well, we went along and came to the Snake Hill Road, and I didn’t suspicion anything, and when he got to the house another fellow came out and said:

“ ‘Go right along in. Pop is waiting for you.’

"But the minute I opened the door and started to go in and saw that the house was empty, I turned, but before I could do anything one of the fellows slipped a sack over my head and they had me tied like you fellows found me almost before I could wiggle. The sack held my arms right down to my side, and the two men grabbed me and threw me down to the floor so I couldn't do anything.

"I tried to yell, but I couldn't do it with that old sack on my head. They left the sack on me until they took me upstairs, and then they took the sack off and put the gag in my mouth and left me lying there.

"They told me not to get scared, that they were going to come in and let me go after a while, and that it was just a trick that one of the students had hired them to play on me. They seemed to think that it was some sort of a hazing affair, and seemed to have a lot of fun out of it.

"I couldn't tell 'em about the ball game or anything else, because, with that old gag in my mouth, and with my hands and feet tied, I couldn't even make motions. Do you fellows know who did it?"

"Sure," said Pink. "Can't you guess?"

"Sweetie?"

"Yes, he and your old friend, Jake Snyder, tried to put up the job. Jake, of course, was doing it out of pure meanness, and, of course, Sweetie was doing it not only to get even with you for busting his hat, but also because he thought he would be doing a good turn for Lakewood by keeping you out of the game."

Thereupon, the full details of events that had taken place on the ball field were explained. When the boys reached the grounds they found that Sweetie had managed to take French leave, and further inquiries disclosed that he had telephoned to his friend Jake, who had immediately quit his job and departed for parts unknown. Sweetie, however, it was found out, returned to his home. It later developed that, for his participation in the affair, he was expelled from Lakewood, although no further punishment was meted out to him.

It was later disclosed that the two men who drove the car had actually told Pep the truth about the matter. They were friends of Jake's, and he had convinced them that it was just a part of a school-boy hazing trick, and, as he and Sweetie had paid them well for their services, and had

assured them that they would not get into any trouble over the escapade. Since their story seemed plausible, they were not prosecuted.

Pep was not at all the worse for wear, excepting that he was mighty hungry, having gone without his breakfast.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FINAL GAME WITH LAKEWOOD

As PEP and his friends came upon the ball field, they were greeted with a roar of cheers almost deafening. The boys had rushed Pep to his room, where he had jumped into his baseball togs and then raced onto the field. Despite his famished condition, they would not let him eat a bite, as Pink told him that lots of athletes considered it a good system to go without a meal before entering upon any big event.

Being commencement week, the crowd in the stands and on the grounds was unusually large. On account of the closeness of the contest, it looked as though the students at Lakewood had almost come over in a body. The cheering that Pep received from the Lakewood rooters was as vociferous as that from his own schoolmates and the baseball fans of Wingate.

As he came near to the home plate his fellow-players rushed out and tried to shake hands with him, all at once. Likewise, the Lakewood captain came over with a beaming smile and making further apologies for the mean trick attempted by Eddie Sweet, shook Pep's hand heartily, which caused a renewed outburst of cheers from the spectators.

As the game had already been delayed more than an hour, of course there was little time wasted in further preliminaries. The Wingate boys took the field and the big struggle was on.

It is doubtful if there was ever a baseball game which took place under circumstances quite like this was. The honorable action of the Lakewood captain had dispelled every particle of bitterness from the rivalry between the two teams. As Doc Tupper had put it to the Lakewood captain, "Of course, we're going to do our best to win and we expect to win; yet, if we do lose, we will feel proud to lose to a team that has as square a bunch of fellows as you fellows have shown yourselves to be."

To which the Lakewood captain had blushinglly replied, "That's all right. We don't expect you

are going to win, but if you do we shall have the same sort of a friendly feeling. We shall feel that we were licked fairly and squarely."

Yet this spirit of friendliness between the two teams did not detract one particle from the earnestness of their struggle to win. In the history of the two schools there never was a game fought more fiercely, yet with an utter absence of bickering. Every decision of the umpire was received without a murmur, a most unusual thing, as every spectator or player in a ball game knows. The spectators seemed to have caught the spirit of the situation, and the brilliant plays were cheered almost equally from both sides.

And there certainly were plenty of brilliant plays. As has been noted, the Lakewood team was superior in many respects to that of Wingate. Having a much larger group of students from which to draw its players, with a professional physical director as a coach and with every possible facility for developing a team, including an indoor batting cage for the winter season, of course these things brought their advantages.

Yet in one thing the Wingate boys had the best of it. That one thing was the absolute harmony

of their team work. The events of the previous game and those connected with their trip to New York had so impressed the Wingate boys with the importance of good team work that their operations were almost like that of a perfectly oiled machine. Time and time again the Wingate boys won points purely upon the success of their splendid signaling system.

Both teams were fortunate in having unusually good pitchers for prep school teams, therefore not a player on either team was able to cross the home plate until the last half of the seventh.

To Pep's deep humiliation, the very first time at bat he tore big holes in the atmosphere, but failed to connect with the ball and was struck out. Probably his eagerness overcame him. The second time up he managed to connect with the ball, but it was a high foul and was caught. Pep came to bat the third time in the last half of the seventh, after two men were already out and no men on bases. This time, however, he succeeded with his usual performance and put across a home run, coming in with the first and only score up to that time. The next man up went out on a pop fly.

Thus the battle continued with neither side

making another score until the ninth inning when, in their half, the Lakewood boys managed to get a sufficient number of safe hits to bring in a run and thus tie the score.

The Wingate boys, in their half of the inning, were still unable to score. The game went on for three further innings with neither side being able to gain an advantage.

In the Lakewood half of the thirteenth inning the spell was again broken and another score registered. When the Wingate boys came to bat the first man was struck out, the second man knocked an infield grounder and was thrown out at first. The third batter managed to draw a free pass. Again Pep came to bat and right there the game was finished.

He made his second home run of the day, bringing in the two scores which were, of course, sufficient to win the game, the score standing 2-3 in favor of Wingate.

To say that the Lakewood boys were not disappointed to lose a struggle so hardly fought would, of course, not be true. Yet there was no soreness. Neither was there any disposition on the part of the Wingate boys to crow too highly

over their victory. They were overjoyed at winning, yet every player realized that he had been obliged to strain to the utmost in order to win, and also realized that, as in the very first game with Lakewood, the victory had been due, very largely, to the brilliant work with the stick by Pep Pindar.

Possibly there never has been a baseball game in which the rival members of the two teams have been cheered so heartily by both sides. As Doc Tupper acknowledged to the Lakewood captain, "You fellows did as much to help us win the championship as anyone when you helped us to find Pep and insisted upon the game being delayed until he could play."

The Lakewood captain replied: "Well, we made you go some, anyway, didn't we? And we are not going to cry over losing the championship this year, since we can't help ourselves. We'll let you have it for a year and then take it away from you again next year."

"Perhaps," said Doc with a grin, "but, you know, you can't sometimes, most always tell."

"But where's our home-run hero?" he suddenly exclaimed, noting that Pep had managed to elude

his cheering and congratulating friends and gotten away from the field.

Little Tick Wood did not need a second guess to find out where to locate the missing Pep. He lead the bunch of fellows straight to the nearest restaurant, and, sure enough, there was Pep busily engaged in trying to eat up all the food in the place.

"I know why you knocked those two home runs now, you old rascal," greeted Tick. "You just wanted to get the game over as quickly as possible, so you could get something to eat."

"You bet I did," mumbled Pep with a grin.

CHAPTER XV

PEP IS INITIATED INTO THE ORDER OF THE GOLDEN BAT

WHILE the principal and teachers at Wingate, as seems to be the custom in most preparatory schools, frowned upon any sort of secret fraternity among the boys, of course there were the usual number of social and literary clubs. Likewise, there was one organization in the school that came nearer to being a secret fraternity than any of the other clubs, although none of its secrets were dark and hidden mysteries. Furthermore, several of the teachers, including Professor Thomas, were honorary members and regular attendants at the annual meeting of this fraternity, which was known as The Order of the Golden Bat. It was not in reality a club, as it did not hold meetings except its big annual blow-out, as the boys called it, at

which there was a hilarious time initiating new members and ending with a grand and glorious feast.

As indicated by its title, this society was composed largely of the fans and players of the baseball team. The rites and ceremonies were varied with the different candidates. In fact, the whole affair was sort of a scheme to get a lot of fun playing horse with the popular heroes of the diamond. The lesser lights usually were given a short initiation, while most of the fun and ingenious effort of the initiators were concentrated upon the chief candidate of each annual occasion, and, of course, Pep was the logical victim for this year.

Pink, Tick and Andy, and several other candidates, had already gone through the mill, Pep being reserved as the final and chief candidate. Carrying out the instructions that had been given to him, Pep had arrayed himself in his baseball suit, and, at the appointed hour, arrived at the gymnasium, where he was met by one of the boys, arrayed in a black cowl and gown, on the front of which was emblazoned two golden bats, cross-wise. Pep was then blindfolded and a pair of gym

sneakers substituted for his baseball shoes. His guide instructed him that he was not to say anything, but simply to carry out all the instructions that would be given to him after he entered the ceremonial chamber.

The guide gave nine raps upon the door, which was opened, and a voice called:

"Who comes here?" Whereupon the guide replied:

"Paul Everett Pindar, a poor, feeble worm of the dust, who is a candidate for admission to our most noble and exalted order."

"Has the candidate been informed that the Order of the Golden Bat permits none to enter its sacred precincts save those who prove their worthiness by submitting to our ancient ordeal to test their strength of soul, mind and body?"

"The candidate has been so informed and has given his sacred word as assurance that he will perform all tasks that are ascribed to him to the best of his strength and ability," was the guide's reply.

"Then let him enter our glorious Temple of Whang and suffer himself to perform the tasks and faithfully obey the commands of our Most Noble and Exalted Ruler."

The guide led Pep to the center of the room, whereupon the boy who was acting as master of ceremonies, in deep, sonorous tones, delivered an address full of strange rigmarole and designed, of course, to show the candidate his own unworthiness and to inform him what an exalted organization he was being permitted to enter, and, furthermore, let him know what a fearful and dangerous ordeal he would have to undergo before he could be admitted. At the conclusion of the exalted ruler's address, he stated:

"Since courage is not only the most necessary qualification for success in any field of effort, but is a trait particularly essential in playing the noble game of baseball, our first effort will be to find whether the candidate has sufficient courage to make him qualified to take his place with the other members of our noble order who have already proven themselves worthy. The first test will be the Leap for Life."

Still blindfolded, Pep was led to the foot of a stairway, and, assisted by the boys, he began to climb the stairs. Finally the guide announced that he had reached the pinnacle and must now prepare himself for the ground jump. Careful instructions were given him as to which direction he

should jump and how careful he must be in order to strike the mattress on the floor below him. As Pep realized how long the stairway had been, he felt that it certainly must be rather a dangerous jump, although he felt certain that no special harm would befall him. He made a prodigious effort, and, amid the roars of laughter, immediately found himself sprawling upon a wrestling mat. The stairway which he had been mounting so carefully, had been arranged by a series of boxes, which the boys kept removing, therefore his leap for life had been only a few feet in height. His guides, of course, promptly lifted him to his feet, and it was announced that the next test would be for endurance.

He was told that, as an especial test for the candidates of the Order of the Golden Bat, he would have to crawl through the Tunnel of Despair, that a hole had been dug underground and sewer pipe laid for a quarter of a mile, and his next ordeal was to crawl through this pipe. He was accordingly led out of the gymnasium, still blindfolded, of course, and finally made to kneel before an object, which, as he felt of it with his hands, sure enough, appeared to be the en-

trance to a large sewer pipe, through which, with considerable squeezing, he managed to crawl.

Never in his life did he realize how long a distance was a quarter of a mile. He kept going on and on and on and the pipe seemed to turn this way and that way, and yet, all the while, he could hear the boys laughing somewhere just outside the pipe. Finally, after what seemed to him ten or fifteen minutes of most strenuous effort, he emerged from the opening, whereupon the blindfold was removed and he was shown that what he had been really crawling through was two big sections of sewer pipe, and that just as he went into one section the boys would put the other section down for him to crawl into and then keep on shifting these two sections until they finally figured that he had proven his quality of endurance.

Again he was blindfolded and guided back to the gymnasium, and told that his next test must be that of strength. He was instructed that it would be necessary for him to pull two ropes, to each of which was attached a weight of three hundred pounds. Still blindfolded, of course, the ends of two large ropes were put into his hands and at the signal he started to pull. Yet, struggle

as hard as he could, he could not seem to budge either of the weights. Finally, thinking that he would move first one and then the other, he gave a tremendous jerk with his right hand, and, immediately, the rope slipped from his left hand and he fell to the floor, whereupon the boys removed the blindfold and showed him that he had been pulling upon the different ends of a single rope, which had been arranged in pulleys so that he had been actually pulling against himself, one hand against the other.

He noted that all of the members of the clan were garbed in the same black robes and cowl with the crossed golden bats on the breast, similar to the gown of his guide. The exalted ruler, however, held in his hand a gilded baseball bat, which he wielded as a scepter.

The ruler then, with the usual rigmarole, began to instruct him as to the importance of a good wind or lung capacity as a quality that all good ballplayers must possess. Therefore the next test was for Pep's lung power. He was led before a machine and long tube, at the end of which was a guage similar to that of a steam engine. On the dial of this guage were various figures repre-

senting the number of pounds of pressure, and Pep was told that, in order to pass the test, he must blow into this tube until he had registered one hundred pounds. Taking the tube in his lips, he puffed and puffed, and, sure enough, the hand of the dial moved slowly around towards a hundred, but, as it reached the hundred pounds, suddenly from some concealed part, there sprayed forth a stream of water which caused him to promptly stop blowing and begin snorting and wiping the water from his face.

The next test was to find out whether he could catch a ball, and, standing at one end of the room, at the other end of which one of the members proceeded to hold up for his gaze what appeared to be a new regulation size baseball. Pep was told to prepare himself to catch this in his bare hands, and suddenly the ball was hurled swiftly at him. He did catch it, but, instead of being a real ball, it turned out to be an imitation made of soft sticky dough.

He next had to give an exhibition of base sliding, and the moment he hit the base he evidently touched off some sort of a blank cartridge, which went off with a very loud report.

Then he was tested for his batting ability. He was given a bat about the size of a toothpick, while the pitcher hurled peas at him, which he made every possible effort to bat, amid the jeers, hoots and howls of the laughing boys.

At this point, the master of ceremonies raised his gilded bat majestically and announced:

"We now come to the grand final ordeal of our ceremony. The candidate has thus far proven his worthiness to the satisfaction of the brethren present. He has given satisfactory evidence of his courage, strength, endurance, lung power, and his ability as a ball player. But something further is required of those who gain admission to the grand and noble Order of the Golden Bat. While we require that our brethren must be proficient in the manly science of ball playing, yet they must be more than merely ball players. We must have members who possess other talents than those displayed upon the diamond. So our next test will be to discover, if possible, whether the candidate possesses some individual talent, something that will distinguish him from all his fellow men.

"The candidate has friends among the brethren assembled, so I would now ask if there is any

member present who knows the history of the candidate who can suggest any further quality that he may show to convince us that he is a desirable member of our most noble and exalted brotherhood."

At this point, from behind one of the cowed faces, there came a voice which Pep recognized as that of his friend Tick's. Making an elaborate bow before the master of ceremonies, Tick said:

"Most noble and worthy ruler of our grand and glorious order, I desire to suggest one further test for our candidate. In his home town, this youth has won much fame as the most silvery-tongued orator of the community. I submit, therefore, most worthy ruler, that the candidate should be required to entertain and instruct the brethren by giving one of his justly famous orations."

"Well spoken, worthy brother," said the exalted ruler promptly. "It shall be as you advise."

"Brethren, give attention while the candidate will proceed to deliver us an address!"

Immediately all the members gathered at one end of the hall, leaving Pep facing them, amid a silence that was most oppressive. How the boys

were able to control their sniggers no one can tell. But to Pep it was the most embarrassing moment of the evening's ordeal. Yet, as he had promised that he would carry out the commands of the master of ceremonies, after coughing and standing, first on one foot and then on the other, he finally began,

"Ladies and gentlemen."

At this opening, the sniggers could no longer be suppressed, and Pep, recalling that there were no ladies present, took a fresh start, saying:

"Fellow citizens."

Then, as the audience waited expectantly, he finally stammered:

"I am no silvery-tongued orator. I never made a speech and I don't know what to say now."

As if by a preconcerted plan, there came cries from the audience:

"Casey at the Bat! Casey at the Bat!" And, despite his protests, he was forced to stumble through the recitation which had given him his opportunity to go to Wingate.

Possibly no gem of elocution ever has been mistreated more frequently than this classic, which the famous actor, De Wolf Hopper, has made so

well known throughout the country. Likewise, it is quite probable that no one ever maltreated the piece quite so atrociously as Pep. However, prompted by Pink and Tick and the other boys, he managed to stumble through it to the finish. But when mighty Casey was struck out, Pep felt also that he himself was all in.

Fortunately, this finished the ordeal and the boys immediately removed their cowls and gowns, and came forward to cheer and congratulate him. Since his initiation concluded the ceremonies of the evening, the next thing on the program was the big eats. Therefore the boys trooped across to one of the school dining-rooms where a bountiful feast was spread, and, amid quips and jibes, everyone was soon engaged in storing away the good food.

At the conclusion of the meal, Doc, who had been the master of ceremonies, arose and briefly announced a speech by Professor Thomas. Tommy was in his element. The one thing that endeared him to the boys was the fact that, while in the class room he was a strict disciplinarian, yet on an occasion like this he was the jolliest boy of them all.

In his speech he alternately paid tribute and poked fun at the various boys assembled. To each candidate who had been initiated he delivered a few pointed remarks, and presented each with a beautifully gilded baseball bat bearing the candidate's name, the date of his initiation, and an appropriate inscription. When it came Pep's turn to receive the golden bat, Tommy said:

"And we now come to one of our new members who has earned a distinction which I am sure not one of us will deny; rather, I feel that each one of us will take pride that one of our brethren has made so excellent a record.

"And I am not speaking entirely of the record that this young man has made on the baseball field, although this has been truly an excellent one. We will often recall his achievements on the diamond, yet he himself, I think, will some day look back upon an achievement which he will count as o'ertopping anything which he has done on the ball field.

"The credit for the victories he has won on the ball field has been due, to a considerable extent, to the fact that he has been bountifully endowed by nature with a talent for ball playing.

But the credit of his achievement as a student is something that he has had to acquire by the exercising of all the talents of strength, endurance, courage, persistence and the other qualifications for which he has been tested during the previous ceremonies of this evening.

"The token that I am about to present will always be a memory of this happy occasion, I am sure, and around it will cling memories of victories worthily won, but back of all of these victories will be the greatest of them all, the victory that he has made in persistently and diligently maintaining his required standing in his classes, despite his natural inclination against being an earnest student.

"So, to you, Pep Pindar, as I hand you this token, I congratulate you, not only for your victories on the field, of which this token is a symbol, but also upon the greater victory that you have achieved in the quiet, industrious hours that you have spent in your study room." Thereupon he handed to Pep a gilded bat, bearing the inscription:

TO PEP PINDAR, THE HOME-RUN KING.

CHAPTER XVI

CLASS DAY AT WINGATE

ALTHOUGH the final game with Lakewood officially closed the baseball season at Wingate, Pep was quite a prominent actor in one further game of baseball. There was more acting than ball playing, however, in this game, so, perhaps, it is hardly fair to use the term "ball game" to characterize the event.

Class Day at Wingate was always wholly given over to all sorts of hilarity and jollification, from early morning until late at night. The alumni of the school, together with relatives and friends of students, assembled for the Commencement Week, and the students devised every possible ingenious method for entertaining themselves and their friends. Of course, there were the usual ceremonies of the graduating class, the usual Class

History, the Class Will, giving various and sundry articles to members. Also, there was the planting of a class tree, and singing of class songs. But the event of greatest hilarity was a fantastic field meet, one feature of which was a burlesque baseball game between a picked nine selected from the freshmen and junior classes against another picked nine from the sophomore and senior classes. Pep, Pink, Tick and Andy were all members of the junior class, having been admitted to this class, skipping the two previous years, because of their work at East Wingate Union School.

It was a real baseball game and the losers were obliged to serve ice cream and cake to the winners, but every year the game was played in some sort of fantastic costumes. This season the Sophomore-Seniors were called the Hobo Nine and the Freshman-Junior team The Dudes.

Players on other teams vied with each other in trying to deck themselves out in the most fantastic costumes imaginable, the Hoboes, of course, arraying themselves in Happy Hooligan outfits and the like, while each of the Dudes tried to outdo even Solomon in all his glory.

Tick, not being able to participate in this event

personally, made up for it by exercising his ingenuity in designing Pep's costume. Somewhere, Tick got hold of an old swallow-tailed suit with a white vest, too large, but the coat and trousers too small. Then, somewhere, he dug up a pair of patent leather pumps and a pair of the most brilliant crimson socks. There was the customary stiff-bosomed, "hard-boiled" shirt with high collar and black bow tie. To top it all was an old stove-pipe hat of the vintage of fifty years ago, about three sizes too small, but tied on to Pep's head with a ribbon under the chin.

Tick had some difficulty in persuading Pep to wear such a ridiculous costume, but, as all the others were doing likewise, and as Pep really felt under strong obligations to "Prof. Wood Tick" for coaching him so ably through school, of course his objections were overcome.

Pep's bigness never stood out more prominently than when he appeared on the ball field arrayed in this peculiar costume. Of course, the fun and laughter distracted considerably from the ball players' ability, although, despite their comical costumes, they played ball just as earnestly as if they were out for the world's championship.

When Pep first came to bat there was an interruption from one of the boys. The umpire obligingly called time, whereupon from back of the grand stand there came a group of boys bearing upon their shoulders a baseball bat at least fifteen feet long. It was explained that, as he had already made a great record with an ordinary bat, they wanted to present him with this "small token" of their appreciation. No sooner had the fellows presenting the bat finished their little "spiel," when another boy also asked the umpire for an extension of time, and presently out came another group of boys, wheeling an old cannon that had been used to decorate the school grounds.

They insisted that, since Pep was proposing to use an extraordinary bat, that, in order to equalize affairs the pitcher should be permitted to use this cannon. After considerable argument it was decided that Pep would not use the big bat until a later game, therefore the services of the cannon was dispensed with and it was lugged off the field.

Whether the distraction of the fun made the pitcher careless or whether the spirit of the occasion moved Pep to unusual effort, his very first crack was another home-run hit, again putting the

ball into the river. Also the swing cracked his swallow-tailed coat pretty nearly from stem to stern. Fortunately, however, the trousers held, although they were pretty sadly dilapidated before the game was finished. The stove-pipe hat, likewise, lost most of its glossiness and accumulated a number of dents. Yet every single time at bat Pep nailed out a home run, and, owing to the fantastic playing, there was one inning in which he batted twice.

The game was called at the end of the fifth inning, and, despite all of Pep's home runs, the Senior-Sophomore team were the winners, and Pep, Pink, and Andy, with other members of the losing team, were obliged to bear in a big cake and a freezer full of ice cream, and serve the same to the winning team, amid the laughter and plaudits of the spectators.

At night each of the four classes had held sort of a banquet, or, as the boys called it, a Grand Class Spread, at which their friends and relatives were their guests. Pep's father, mother and sister, Pop Snyder, and the Rev. Mr. Fletcher were present at Class Day, and, of course, were guests at the Junior Class Spread in the evening. An-

other guest whom Pep did not, by any means, consider last or least was Clara Sweet.

The guests, of course, had been present at the Class Day exercises, and had especially enjoyed the fantastic ball game. Everybody was in a jovial mood, and even Pep's father was beginning to act as though he was having a good time, although, as usual, it had required Katy's utmost efforts as a coxer to persuade him to come over to the affair.

Tick, on account of his well known abilities as a rough-and-ready speaker, had been elected the toast-master for the Junior Spread. There was no set program of speech-making, but as soon as everyone felt comfortably stuffed with the bounteous food that had been provided, Tick started, calling upon various prominent members of the class and also the invited guests, to make speeches. After Pink had responded with a brief and joking talk and Andy had blundered through an apology for not being able to speak, Tick next began a most flowery introduction as to the treat that was in store for the assembled guests, stating that there was a famous silvery-tongued orator present, "than whom, etc.——"

Of course it did not take long for the folks to get on to the fact that Tick was referring to Pep. That worthy himself knew what was coming the minute the words silvery-tongued orator were spoken. Furthermore, he was absolutely determined that he was not going to make a fool of himself before his folks, especially with a certain young lady present. Consequently, despite all of Tick's eloquence and the hilarious urgings of his friends, Pep refused to budge one inch from his chair or say anything but "Nothing doing," which he repeated most vigorously several times.

Finally, seeing that his efforts were not going to avail in this direction, a happy inspiration came to Tick's mind and he proceeded:

"Very well. In view of the fact that our silvery-tongued orator seems to be in one of his extremely modest moods, due to the fact, no doubt, that he has been leading a rather strenuous life and been very much in the limelight lately, it has just occurred to me that we have with us to-night a gentleman from whom our gifted friend probably has inherited his well-known talent. Therefore, since the son refuses to entertain us with his eloquence, I now have pleasure in calling upon the father for a few remarks.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. John Pindar."

To say that Mr. Pindar was surprised is to put it mildly. Yet he was game, and, after some blushing and giving sort of a humorous glare at Tick for calling upon him, Mr. Pindar arose to his feet and said:

"Well, Mr. Toast-master and folks. I reckon that in spite of all that has been said about silvery-tongued orators, that speech-making doesn't run very strong in the Pindar family—that is, among the men folks." This latter with a quizzical smile in the direction of Mrs. Pindar and Katy.

"However, I suppose the one thing to do to satisfy you folks is to show you that I can't make a speech by trying to make one.

"I don't know just what you expect me to say, but there is one thing that I have been thinking a good deal about to-day and I might as well get it off my chest here as anywhere, I suppose. I want to say that I have enjoyed myself about as much to-day and to-night as I ever have in my life. When I was a boy, we didn't go in much for this sort of thing and I have always had to keep my nose so close to the grindstone that, I guess, I have never taken as much time as I should have to get more fun out of life.

"I used to think that my boy, and you other fellows also, were wasting altogether too much of your time in playing ball and having fun; but I am beginning to see that maybe I was mistaken. Anyway, I don't believe I ever laughed more in my life than I have to-day, so I just want to say to you boys that I am mighty glad that things have turned out as they have. As you all know I was a little dubious about having Paul come over here to this school, because I figured that all he cared about was ball playing. But I have been talking with some of his teachers to-day and the things they have said to me have made me change my mind quite a bit.

"I find that my boy and you other East Wingate boys also have not been going behind in your books in order to get ahead in your games, and I am beginning to see that there is more in this matter of getting an education than I ever thought there was. I never had much chance to go to school myself and I guess I didn't get quite the right idea about the matter, but now, as the church folks say, I have been converted, and I am mighty glad that Paul and you other boys have done so well in your school, and I want to

say right here that I hope he and all of you, too, will go right on through, clear to the top, college and everything. I guess this isn't much of a speech, but it is all I have got to say."

But it was a speech that made a big hit with the boys, nevertheless. The applause that followed was so hearty as to cause Mr. Pindar to blush almost as deeply as Pep was already blushing.

Following the class spreads, there was a general school dance in the school gymnasium. As a group of our East Wingate young folks were gathered in one of the halls adjoining the gym during an intermission between the dances, Tick remarked:

"Well, Pep, old top, your dad's little talk to-night takes away a lot of our worries, don't it? I didn't know but what we might have to fix you up for another prize-speaking contest in order to get you a chance to get to college, but now your father has relieved my mind on that point."

"Never you mind," said Pep, "I wouldn't make another speech in order to get to go to any college in the country. Just the same I was mighty tickled at what father said about it."

"Yes," put in Pink, "looks now as though we can all make Syracuse University together. You know, Pep, we have been planning to go all along. This will let you in with us, too. We'll all go and keep the old East Wingate gang together."

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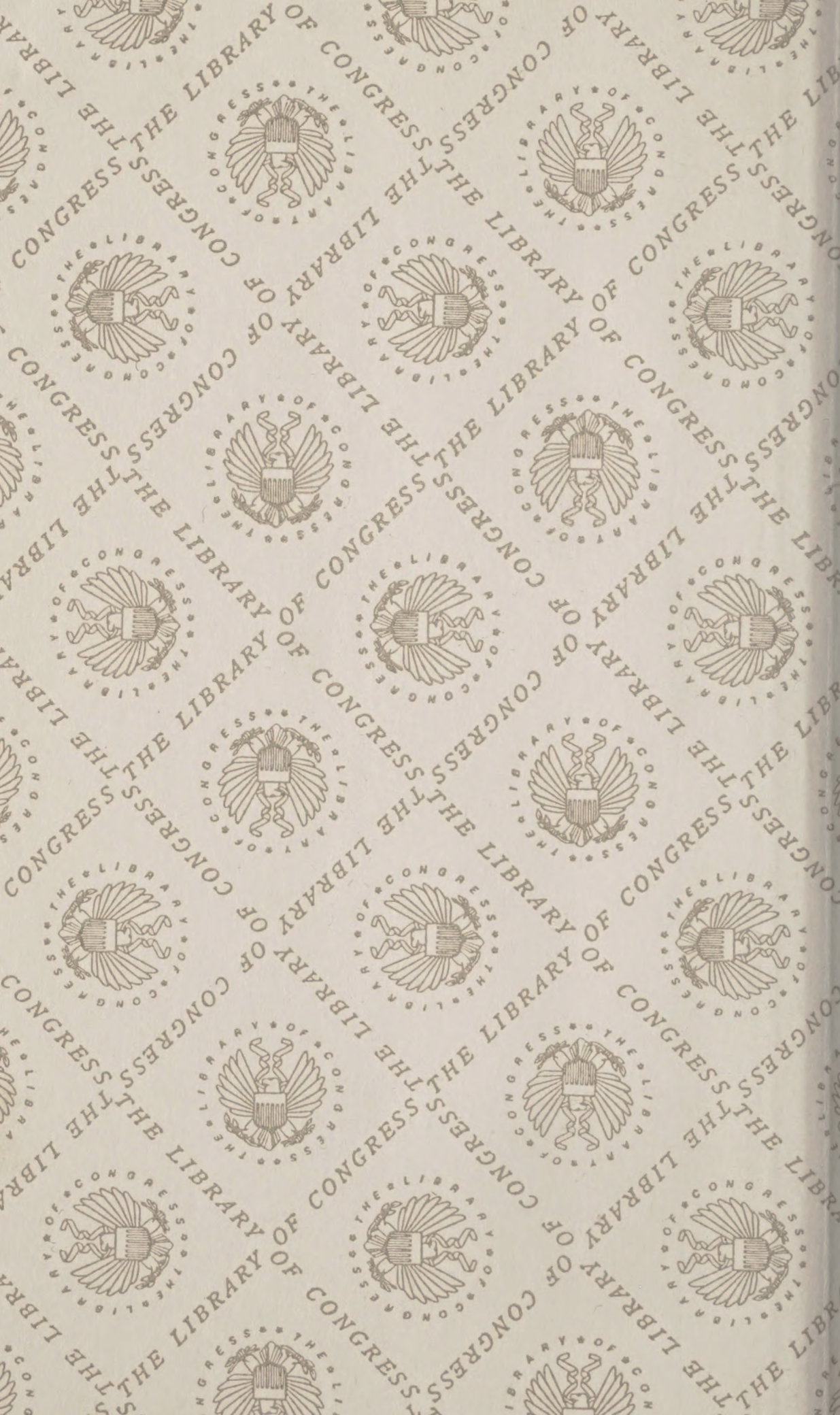
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